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Book 1

THE LAST INCARNATION.

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GOSPEL LEGENDS

OF

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

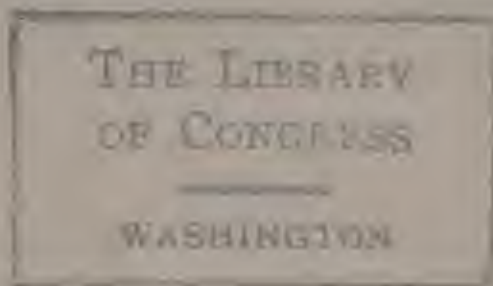
Julius Louis
BY A. CONSTANT.
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TRANSLATED BY  
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THE LAST INCARNATION.

PROLOGUE.

I.

“I WILL not leave you fatherless,” said the Christ, when about to quit the earth; “I will come again to you.”

Ye people, who have believed in the words of the Christ, and who still await a consoler, know that the Christ, your Saviour, has never abandoned you. Know that he suffers with you, that he labors with you, that he groans, and that he prays with you.

The Christ is the human form of the divine idea. That form you are all called upon to realize, and to clothe yourselves anew with its royal majesty.

A model has been given to us in the person of Jesus, our brother, the head and the mediator of humanity, in whom God himself lived, willed and acted, so that his person was that of the Man-God.

Now, Jesus, the Man-God, did not accomplish life in all its phases; he went through only the sorrowful periods here below.

Because it was necessary that humanity should first learn how to suffer, in order to know how to be happy afterwards; should know how to obey, in order to learn how to reign. It was to holy and austere poverty that was intrusted the education of the heirs of God, in order that through privations they might learn the true use of their Father's riches.

In teaching men to love their neighbor more than themselves, and their soul more than their body, and God more than their soul, the Christ emancipated them from the servitude of the flesh, and he elevated the flesh itself by calling it to share the glory of free souls.

The Christ did not limit his word to an exclusive form ; the spirit of which it contains the germ is universal.

He sowed the seed, and time has ripened the grain.

The word of the Christ, like that of the ancient prophets, has had unintelligent and self-interested interpreters, who have wished to seal it like the stone of his sepulchre.

But the word traverses stones, and cannot be kept captive ; it escapes in spite of walls ; it passes in spite of gates of iron ; it goes forth in spite of sentinels.

Brothers, the word of the Christ is the word of liberty, of equality, of fraternity.

Of liberty, because he has told us not to fear those who can kill the body, and to preserve before God the independence of our souls.

Of equality, because he has said to us : you have all only one and the same father, one and the same master : he is God, and you are all brothers !

Of fraternity, because he has told the strong to be the protectors of the weak, the learned to instruct the ignorant, the rich to provide for the necessities of the poor.

This word presided at first over the construction of the hierarchical body of the primitive church ; then the priests were fathers chosen by the people ; the bishops were superintendents, who took care of the poor, and who protected the orphans and the widows ; and all, from a spirit of conciliation and peace, referred their differences to a single judge chosen from among themselves, and who was therefore called the servant of the servants of God.

Oh ! how beautiful was the Church then, in the unity of her head and in the harmony of her members ! How grand was that society of brothers, presided over by its fathers, and administered by its old men !

The unity of object, and the simplicity of means, found a use for the co-operation of each in the work of all ; each group of the faithful moved harmoniously around its centre, like the satellites around their planets, which themselves move peacefully around their sun.

For then the interest of the pastors was that of their flocks, and the demon of avarice, which destroyed Judas, had not yet brought

trouble into the sanctuary ; pride had not yet transformed the charges of charity into prerogatives and worldly grandeurs, and the rival passions had not divided the inheritance of the Lord.

But, in order that it might be overcome by good, evil had to be manifested ; and the Christian law was as a snare spread for the errors and the irregularities of the flesh.

Human vices, by manifesting themselves in the Church of the Christ, condemned themselves ; therefore they were not able to prevail there even for a few moments, but by means of hypocrisy and lying.

When misguided pontiffs surpassed the luxury and the insolence of kings, the spirit of the Church, which has never ceased to be that of the Christ, groaned in the heart of the saints, and condemned the sacrilegious usurpers, by always reminding the sovereign pontiff that he was the servant of the servants of God.

When the inquisition tortured souls and bodies, to constrain that which God himself respects in man,—liberty of conscience, the spirit of the Christ wept over the victims, and justly excommunicated the persecutors, by protesting that the Church has a horror of blood.

Thus, by their very crimes, the priests have shown more magnificently and more splendidly how holy is religion !

Now the Church seems to sleep a sleep of death, because the priests have separated themselves from the people, and form a caste apart, imbued with pharisaical traditions and the prejudices of education ; but the Church cannot be separated from humanity. If the priests remain stationary while humanity advances, it is because they wish soon to separate themselves from the religion of the Christ, for the spirit of the Saviour of the people advances with the people.

Those men have grown old, without being able to free their feet from the swaddling bands of their earliest infancy ! They believe in the Gospel, without interrogating its admirable symbolism, and they admit its marvels literally, as little children give faith to the fantastic stories of the woman who rocks them.

They are the guardians of the doctrine after the manner of the sentinels of kings' palaces ; they defend the entrance, and never go in themselves. The dead letter has remained in their hands,

as the mortal body of the Christ remained in the arms of his weeping mother, under the lowering and gloomy sky of Calvary ; but the spirit has gone to make war on the powers of darkness, to break the gates of hell, and to deliver the groaning crowd of captive souls.

Everywhere the spirit of the Gospel makes conquests, except in the closed minds and frozen hearts of those who call themselves the depositaries of the Gospel.

The sciences gravitate towards their grand synthesis ; unity governs all ideas, and harmony arranges them in a marvellous order ; analogy gives to faith, enlightened by science, the key of all problems ; synthesis brings together all symbols, and proclaims religious unity by the voice of all ages ; the truly Catholic idea merely begins to be born, and those old men are there, stopping their ears, closing their eyes, making themselves motionless upon the ruins of the past, like urns upon graves !

Well then, since those who should teach the people have no longer any voice, since the Word has no longer any need of them for interpreters, let us borrow a new gospel legend from the genius of the people, and from their aspirations after humanitarian progress !

Let us complete the epopœia of the Christ by the allegorical recital of his second coming, and let us relate his triumphs to those who have wept so much over his sorrows.

II.

The Son of God is the perfect man ; he is the idea of human perfection manifested by the Word and realized by works.

God utters from all eternity the word that must save the people ; and humanity works and advances in progress, only to realize that word.

The divine idea of human perfection was realized in different degrees in all the great men who were the heads and models of humanity ; then it was completed and summed up in Jesus.

For Jesus, having given himself entire to humanity, by a devotedness without bounds, has transmitted his life entire, under

the symbols of the fraternal bread and the wine of union, to the whole of humanity, which he has thus formed into a single body.

So that now the Christ is no longer an individual; he is a people.

He lives in all those who are animated by the spirit of the Gospel; he speaks by the mouth of all those who utter a word conformable to his.

He has promised that the reign of intelligence should be his reign, and that his second coming should bring down the clouds from heaven, that is to say, should free religion from its mysteries and its fables.

He must shine as the lightning, which shines from the east even to the west; and the eagles of genius must gather together to reply to his call.

Let this book then be the last legend of Jesus, the son of Mary. Let us cause his sweet and divine figure to descend from heaven and traverse the earth, assuming all forms, as in the marvellous stories of the middle ages, in order to give instruction to all, and to prepare for his great coming!

Let the people read and at last understand truth under the form of allegories; let it recognise and love always its Saviour and its model, in the person of the proletary of Galilee.

We shall borrow from the ancient gospel legend its simple and popular form; for he who speaks to all must use language which may be understood by all.

FIRST LEGEND.

THE LITTLE CHILD WHO SEEKS HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER.

At that time there was a little child who walked all alone in the country, and who seated himself by the side of the road and cried.

His poor bare little feet were swollen and sore; his shaking little hands were blue with cold; for it was at the end of autumn,

and the north wind whirled about the last yellow leaves of the stripped trees.

He was barely covered by a poor little dress of thin white woollen stuff, and the frost of the morning which had been melted from the trees by the pale sun, had wet the curls of his blond hair with a freezing rain.

There was an inexpressible sweetness in his eyes full of tears ; and while his eyes wept, his little shivering mouth seemed to try to smile.

He rested for a moment, then he clasped his hands as if in prayer, and courageously resumed his walk.

And to all those who passed and who asked him why he cried, the poor child answered : " I am seeking my father and my mother."

Now, on that day a young and rich lady was returning in a carriage from her beautiful country seat.

She was magnificently arrayed and voluptuously perfumed ; seated upon soft cushions covered with silk, she was sad and disgusted with life : for God had not made her a mother.

She saw the little child who was walking with bare feet and who was cold, and she felt her heart moved at the sight of his wonderful beauty.

Then she stopped her carriage, and having called the poor little traveller, she said to him : " Where are you going ?"

" I am going to seek my father and my mother," replied the little child.

" And where will you find your father and your mother ? Are they far from here ?"

" They are travellers like me upon the earth ; and while I seek them here, perhaps they are seeking me further off, with much anxiety and sorrow."

" How long since did you leave them ?"

" I did not leave them, they went away from me to work, in order that they might get food for me. But, perhaps, they may not have been able to find bread for their work, and have gone still further ; then perhaps still further off, and I have remained an orphan because my parents were poor."

" Well ! I am rich, and I wish to be a mother to you in order

to help you to find yours ; get up into my carriage, and you will be sheltered from the cold wind which freezes your hands, and you will rest your poor bruised feet."

"Thank you, madam, but you cannot be a mother to me unless you are like my mother, and unless you do in her place what she would do in yours. For to fulfil the duties of a mother it is necessary to have the heart of a mother : and for that you must be very pure before God and before men.

"Your face is beautiful like my mother's, and your voice is sweet like hers ; but tell me if your heart is like hers, and if your works are such as she would do if she were fortunate and rich like you."

"Child, your language astonishes me ; who can have suggested such words to you ? I do not know your mother, and I cannot tell you if my heart is like hers. But get up beside me, and then you shall tell me what I ought to do in order to resemble her."

"A mother does not say to the little forsaken child at her feet : Come to me : for perhaps the child cannot climb up to her. She descends and inclines herself towards him, as our Father who is heaven inclines himself towards his smallest creatures : the heart of mothers is like the heart of God."

"Little child, your words have in them something which offends me ; I have never been a mother because I am rich, and because I wait for a husband who can give me a fortune equal to my own. I offer you a place by my side, and I am very willing to extend my hand to you to help you to climb up here ; why do you wish me to get down and to soil my feet in the damp sand ?"

"Because you spoke to me of taking the place of my mother ; and my mother, in order to take me in her arms, was never afraid of soiling her feet. When my mother made me sit by her side, it was not from pity, it was with the joy of a tender love. I pity you, because you are rich, and because you are afraid of the dampness of the road ; for the rich cushions on which you sit are perhaps wet with the tears of the poor man and the sweat of the workman. I prefer to continue my painful journey rather than to take a seat by your side."

The young woman blushed, and, without replying, made a sign to her servants to go on. The carriage soon left the child

far behind. The woman had her heart oppressed, and regretted that she had thus abandoned him; but her pride had been wounded. She asked herself who that extraordinary child could be; then she fell into a great sadness and wept.

But soon she dried her tears, at the thought that they might injure the beauty of her eyes; and in order to distract her mind, she began to dream of balls and brilliant parties.

Still the little child had remained upon the road and walked on.

After the beautiful lady, it was a rich cavalier who passed; he did not even look at the young pilgrim, whom his horse almost ran over, and he continued his course.

Then came an old man clothed in black, who walked slowly, moving his lips and looking upon the pages of a book; it was a priest much respected in the neighborhood and scrupulously attached to the duties of his profession; he did not love children much, because he had no family, having grown old in the austerity of his holy ministry; he stopped, and looking at the little traveller, he said to him:

“To what parish do you belong?”

“To all parishes,” replied the child, “for I have no fixed abode. I seek my parents, and I am like them a wanderer on the earth.”

“Your parents are vagabonds,” said the old priest with a gesture of disdain.

“My parents are poor.”

“Here,” said the priest, and he threw a piece of money upon the road.

“Thank you,” said the child, “I did not ask you for alms. I seek my father.”

“I do not know him,” said the pastor.

“I know that very well, for you cannot know what a father is. Keep your alms, and may the feeling of compassion which you have had towards me soften your heart and make you understand why you say in the prayer: ‘Our Father who art in heaven!’”

“Child, with what pride do you presume to give lessons to an old man and a pastor? You have, doubtless, been brought up in impiety, and your parents are not Christians.”

“You ought not to speak to me so of my parents, you ought to

teach me to respect them. They have brought me up in the love and in the thought of the Lord. I do not give lessons to an old man, and I answer him because he spoke to me. You are a priest, and by that title you are the guide of children; nevertheless, instead of assisting me to find the parents whom I seek, you insult them before me by a shameful suspicion, in supposing that they have brought me up in impiety: can I approve what you say, when you speak neither according to charity nor according to justice?"

"Where are we?" cried the terrified priest; "this child is doubtless possessed by a demon, and it is on this account that he answers with so much audacity and malice."

"I am not possessed by a demon, but God permits a child to speak with the facility and the boldness of a man: can a special gift of God be a crime?"

"It is the child of some hardened heretic, and he repeats what he has heard," said the old pastor shaking his head, as if he talked to himself.

"Yes, I repeat what I have heard from the very mouth of my father."

"And what is your father's name?"

"Tell me what is the name of our Father who is in heaven."

"In that case then you would be the child of God?"

"It is you who say it and who teach children to say it when you make them repeat: 'Our Father who art in heaven.'"

"My little friend, you are a reasoner, and that does not become childhood."

"Reason becomes every age; but old age gives no right to impose silence on a child when he says nothing but what is respectful and just, in order to reply when he is questioned."

"All is lost," murmured the old priest to himself, "the country children dispute with us. All belief is departing."

And resuming the absent reading of his book, he again moved his lips, continued his route, and forgot the travelling child.

Still the night was near, and the little child remaining alone upon the road, walked, and wept, and prayed always.

Then a poor woman, dragging a faggot of bushes, was going towards her hovel; she saw the child and had compassion on

him, for she was a mother ; she questioned him and took him by the hand, then she said to him : “Come to my hut, you shall warm yourself with my children, and you shall share with them the bread which I will give them ; to-morrow I will lead you to the neighboring city, and we will look for your parents.”

The child, looking then at the poor woman, loved her ; because she was bent under a burden, and because she had said to him : “Come, and you shall be as one of my children.”

“Let us go,” said he to her ; “and for the bread which you shall give me, I will give you the food which preserves the soul for eternal life.”

But the woman of the people did not understand what he said to her, and they arrived together at the hovel.

The children of the poor woman were seated round the fire : they did not rise to go and meet their mother, neither did they make a place for the unknown child.

Then their mother, raising her hand upon them, struck them ; but the newly come child began to weep and said to the mother : “You do not know how to be a mother, and yet you had bowels of compassion for the child who suffered. Therefore you shall be saved on account of the visit I make to this house, but your children will be the affliction of your old age.”

“If that be so,” said the woman, “I should like it as well if God would take them out of the world.”

Hardly had she uttered these words, when the oldest of her children breathed a sigh and died ; then she rushed to him, and took him in her arms sobbing.

Then she said to the unknown child :

“Go away ! go away ! Have you come here to make my children die ?”

“Woman, learn to bring them up better, if you wish them to live ! However, I have pity on your grief : be consoled, your son is living.”

The young boy who had just died then opened his eyes, as if he woke out of sleep, and the terrified mother cast herself on her knees, for she knew that the travelling child must be Jesus Christ himself.

The divine little child then smiled upon her, drew from his

bosom a little cross which he gave to her, again advised her to bring up her children better, and disappeared.

That evening he was seen at a short distance from there, upon the bank of a stream which was crossed by a plank placed on two stones ; the child was seated in the moonlight, the wind raised his blond hair, and he pressed his two little arms crossed upon his breast, as if to warm himself. Some one asked him in passing what he was waiting for. He replied :

“ I am waiting for my father.”

Soon afterwards, a poor blind old man came to cross, and he directed his steps towards the bridge of the stream, by feeling with his stick along the rough and stony ground.

Then the child rose, and running to meet the poor blind man, he took him by the hand and led him, for the road in that place was dangerous and broken.

Then placing the hand of the old man on his shoulder, he served him for a support as far as the neighboring city, which they entered without being seen.

The child conducted the old man to his dwelling, but he was not willing to enter, for he said to him :

“ My mother is waiting for me.”

And in one of the most retired suburbs of the city he went and rapped softly at the door of a house which was carefully closed.

“ Who is there ?” asked a woman’s voice, the accent of which was profoundly desolate.

“ It is your son ; open,” said the little child.

“ My son will not come back again,” said the voice, “ he died yesterday, and to-day he was put into the ground.”

“ Open to me,” replied the child, “ I am Jesus, the friend of those who weep, and I have made myself once more a little child, in order to restore to you him whom you think you have lost ! Open to me ! for Mary, my celestial mother, holds your little child upon her knees, in the paradise of innocence ; and she sends hers to you that you may be very sure that he whom you love is very happy.”

Then the door opened softly and the child entered ; he seated himself on the knees of the poor mother, and related to her how

he had come, and how he had tried the hearts of those whom he had met on his route.

Then the mother having ceased weeping, asked him if those who had met him without knowing him would be punished for not having assisted him.

“They will be sufficiently punished when they shall know that it was I,” replied Jesus. “And they will know it when they begin to become better; for the regret of a good deed is the greatest punishment for not having done it. I revisit the earth to try and to console. So long as I still retain the form of a child, I shall seek my father and my mother. But as perhaps no one yet knows how to accomplish all his duties towards a child, I shall first give the example of accomplishing those of a child. I shall not again find my father and my mother here below; but I will choose them from among those who have need of a child to love them. The blind man whom I can guide to prevent him from stumbling over the stones of the road shall be my father, the poor widow who weeps, and whom I can console, shall be my mother, and the deserted orphans who have no one to love them shall be my brothers and my sisters.”

SECOND LEGEND.

THE SAME CHILD AND THE SAME PRIESTS, AFTER AN INTERVAL OF
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS.

THE Christ appeared to sleep in the house of the poor widow; but during the hours of night, his soul returned to heaven, in order not to see the crimes of earth.

He revisited the paradise of innocence, and caressed his new brother, the widow's son, to whom he spoke of his poor mother, now less desolate: the soul of the Christ loves to rest in heaven among little children, and to resume all the infantile graces which filled the soul of Mary with so sorrowful a happiness, when, in the midst of the caresses of her well-beloved son, she

had a presentiment of the anguish of Calvary ! Now the celestial virgin no longer fears that her tender child may die a second time, and she knows that henceforth he will no more be taken from her ; nevertheless, the ecstasy of her happiness is still imbued with a remembrance full of melancholy ; and the joy of the formerly sorrowful mother* remains in a concentration which resembles sadness.

“Mother,” said Jesus to her, “now that I am no longer a mortal man, but a human form of the divine idea, I can descend upon the earth without suffering there, and without ceasing to be near you ! I will assume, to instruct men, the appearances of childhood, of weakness, of suffering ; I have already begun to appear to them under the figure of a child, only they will no longer see either my birth or my death. I shall go through all the phases of life in my appearances, and will transfigure myself, as my doctrine must be transfigured : will you, O my mother, also be willing to speak sometimes to those who are likewise your children ?”

“It shall be done according to your will, my sweet lord and son,” said Mary, kissing him on the forehead. “I know that if you are the type of the perfect man, I must serve as a model of the woman and the mother ; my heart never leaves you, O my son ! I shall be near you when you again traverse the earth ; if it be necessary to manifest to men my symbolical form, you have only to will, and I shall appear to them. Go, therefore, and do according to your desire ; for already the sun has reappeared upon the earth, where your human appearance now rests asleep : the hours pass quickly in heavenly conversations, and do you go now and wake again upon the earth, my beautiful beloved child !”

The sun began to raise the greyish veil which covered the black bell-towers, the bluish domes, and the moist roofs of the city in which the divine child slept.

The poor widow had already risen, and, looking upon the Son of God as he slept, she thought she again saw her child for whom she had wept so much.

* Mater dolorosa

He rose ; and both together prayed to our Father who is in heaven.

Then the Saviour said to the woman :—

“ Mother, I am going now where the service of my father calls me. I shall come back this evening, therefore weep no more.”

The widow fell upon her knees, and dared not retain him. It was now broad daylight, and Jesus having gone out, walked through the streets of the city.

Then the children of the people, seeing his beauty, his gentleness, and his strange dress, began to follow after him, mocking him ; and Jesus continued on his way without looking at them and without uttering a word.

But he groaned in himself, and he prayed while he said : “ How shall these arrive at the knowledge of their rights, if they grow up thus in insolence, and in the forgetfulness of fraternity ! Poor children of the people, your greatest misfortune is not poverty, it is ignorance and brutishness ! Happy will he be who shall teach you your duties, and shall make you love them. For you will then know your rights, and virtue will make you free.”

Then one of those children, more wicked than the others, and irritated because Jesus answered nothing, approached him with an insolent air, and struck him.

Jesus stopped him, and said to him with gentleness :

“ What have I done to you ? It is not I who will return to you the evil that you do to me, but others will return it to you. For you are wicked, and the world, which is wicked like you, will return to you evil for evil.”

Having said these words, the child Jesus disappeared from the midst of the children of the people, and all searched for him with astonished eyes.

Now, in the porch of a neighboring temple, other children were seated, and a priest, standing in the midst, instructed them.

Jesus came and took a seat among the children, and listened to the priest.

Then, when the priest had finished speaking, he questioned the children ; and having come to Jesus, he asked him : “ What is God ?”

“ God alone can himself say what he is,” replied the child :

“but you could not understand his words, for they would be infinite and eternal.”

“That is not rightly answered,” said the priest; “you should say, God is a spirit, eternal, independent, unchangeable and infinite, who is present everywhere, who sees everything, who can do everything, who has created all things, and who governs all things.”

“I do not understand,” said the child Jesus. “You say that God is a spirit; are there then several spirits like unto God? Why do you not say that God is spirit? And then I should ask you if God is spirit only? is he not love and power?”

“I do not understand in my turn,” said the priest.

“Why then do you endeavor to explain what you cannot understand? What is God for us? He is our father who is in heaven: we know nothing more of him. Look at the world, and you will not doubt his being: but do not endeavor to define it; for how will you express by human words him whom immensity cannot contain? him who, in producing by his word millions of suns and of worlds, has hardly pronounced for us the first letter of his name?”

“Do you come here to insult your pastor?” replied the old priest, with bitterness. “Since you are so wise and have learnt your lesson so well, you need not come here again: begone!”

“And why should I go out from the house of prayer? are you here to drive away the little children whom your master called around him? You are more proud and more harsh than the doctors of Jerusalem, for, when the child Jesus came to converse with them in the temple, they questioned him and replied to him, being astonished at the wisdom of his words; but it is not said that they wished to drive him away.”

At these words, the priest became red with anger. He opened his mouth to speak, but he found no voice; in vain did he move his lips and his tongue while he rolled his eyes, his power of speech had been taken from him, and he could no longer articulate any sound.

Then Jesus ascended slowly towards the altar, took the priest's chair, and seating himself in his presence, he began to teach.

“My brothers and my sisters,” said he to the children, “do

not try to know what God is ; you could not comprehend him ; but endeavor to love him by thinking that he is good and that he loves you. Do not repeat at hazard that he is a spirit, for you cannot understand what a spirit is : but obey him as you obey your father and your mother. For it is he who wishes your mother to love you, and your father to work for you. And if your father should die, and if your mother were taken from you, think that you have always a father in heaven, and that God will always love you as your mother has loved you.

“ You are all brothers, because God is the father of you all : and he loves you all, the poor as well as the rich, but more particularly the poor, because they have more to suffer. Be therefore like God your father : love each other all of you without distinction : but love most those who are the weakest, the smallest and the poorest, in order that you may be like your good father, who will see it and who will bless you.

“ You are glad when people love you and when they do good to you. You do not like to have them take away what is yours, to have them insult you, strike you or prevent you without good reason from doing what you wish. Those who do not love you and who do you harm, you say that they are wicked ; and those who love you and are kind to you, you say they are good.

“ Well ! if you wish to be the children of God and to obey him, never be wicked, for God is not wicked. On the contrary be always good, and do as much good to the world as you can ; for God is good and can do only good.

“ Pray to your Father that he may make you good ; it is his will and his desire ; but it must also be your desire and your will ; and the more you are accustomed to pray, the more you will be accustomed to desire what is good. Now, when you often desire to be good, by degrees you become better.

“ Pray ; because prayer makes you think of God ; and the thought of God is a good and salutary thought. Pray often ; because your youth distracts you, and you have frequent need to be recalled to wisdom.”

When the Child-Jesus had finished speaking, the old priest who had again come to himself, fell at his feet, and suddenly recovering the power of speech, said to him : “ Lord, forgive me, for I

could not at first believe that it was thou. The words which thou hast uttered are those of the Saviour of the world ; and I was deprived of voice, because thou alone hast the words of eternal truth."

Jesus said to him : " You know not how to understand, because for too long a time you have ceased to love. Still it is not you who are culpable, but those who have brought you up thus. I know your uprightness and the purity of your morals, according to the world ; but know that, before my Father, it is charity which purifies.

" Therefore, old man, if you wish to enter into life, become again a little child and ask God to grant you a little simplicity and love. Fill no longer with empty words the flock which I have intrusted to you ; love children in order that they may understand, for their understanding is in the heart."

And rising, Jesus went out from the temple.

At the door he found a woman who was waiting for him and who said : " Good Saviour, divine child of all desolate mothers, brother of all orphans, forgive me for having approached this temple at the sound of thy voice. How could I remain alone in my dwelling after having received thee there ; and whither can I go henceforth except in the traces of thy blessed feet ?"

Jesus answered her :

" Mother, you know well that I love you, why then should you fear to be left alone ? Do not attach yourself so much to the form which passes. To-day I appear under the figure of a child, and to-morrow under another appearance ; but my spirit is always the same.

" My spirit is that of God living in humanity ; and if all understood that spirit, there would be no more death, for humanity does not die.

" The mother who has lost her child, and the child who has lost its mother, are they not made to come together and be united ? Can you say that you are alone in the world, and have you not always the means of loving ?

" Woman, I shall return this evening to your humble dwelling in order to drive away the remembrance of death and to bless it ;

but to-morrow, if you seek me again under the form which I have to-day, you will no longer find me.

“Then, if you wish to find me, search among the children who are deserted and who weep. And if you find one who, at night, knows not where to lay his head, and who will be thrown into prison, with the malefactors, because he is an orphan and forsaken, woman, take him by the hand, for I tell you in truth that he is your son, and that all the good which you shall do him, you will have done to me.”

On finishing these words, the child was carried elsewhere by the spirit of God, and the woman resumed the road to her house, meditating upon the words of Jesus in the bottom of her heart.

THIRD LEGEND.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE INNOCENTS.

AFTER this, the Christ, by the divine power of the spirit, translated himself into several places at once ; for his love led him to visit the sufferings of children, and among so many poignant sufferings which called to him at the same time, he would not have known which to choose in order to visit first.

He saw, therefore, at the same time the thousand stations of this horrible industrial purgatory, in which are tortured the children of the people : There he saw meagre women, with cadaverous and fixed looks, working without respite and without repose to prolong for a few days the existence of their little children, who seemed, during that time, to sleep by their side.

But the poor innocents did not sleep, they were in a lethargy ! For, to prevent them from suffering and crying during the long days of torture, their mothers themselves had made them take a poison which kills slowly and which deadens pain.

Other children, larger, but still more sad to look upon, were working like the wheels of the machines, which incessantly

threatened them with a horrible death, if they allowed their attention to be distracted for a single moment. There prevailed the silence of death, only interrupted sometimes by words which seemed to come from hell.

The Child-God did not speak to them, for they could not have understood him ; he did not manifest himself to their eyes, they would not have recognised him ; only he went and came in the midst of those poor children, and touching their head and their chest he renewed their courage and prevented thought from being awakened in their mind.

His eyes were filled with tears, and in the presence of so much suffering, he again clothed himself with the bleeding remembrances of Calvary. The crown of thorns seemed to tear his brow afresh, the marks of the nails made his hands and his feet bloody, and his arms were sadly clasped around a cross.

And he began again to pray as he had prayed in the garden of Olives, with a mortal sadness and inexpressible anguish. And he said : “ My Father, take pity on the suffering of the innocents ! touch the hearts of the rich, and bring about the deliverance of the poor ! ”

And he went thus, suffering, praying and weeping, from house to house, seeking the rich and the owners of the factories, looking upon them and passing before them, while he showed them his child’s face torn by the horrible crown, and his little hands pierced, and his cross, and his blood, and his tears.

But those men, in consequence of loving and serving the idols of gold and of silver, had become like unto them ; they had eyes and they saw not, they had ears and they did not wish to hear. Those among them who perceived the Christ or who deigned to remark him, asked him with an ironical smile if he brought them any money.

Then the Christ gathered in his hand his tears and the blood which flowed from his heart, and every tear was changed into a piece of silver, and every drop of blood into a piece of gold. And he gave these to them in his indignation, saying to them : “ You have made me change my tears into silver, and my blood into gold ; but when my father shall do justice, shudder and tremble ! the silver shall again become tears for you, and the gold shall

again become blood, and you will be compelled to repay with usury."

Then he left them and transported himself with the rapidity of thought into the houses where were taught the children of the rich. There it was no longer the prolonged agony of the body, it was the torture of the soul. The children, ranged in herds, were pent up within gloomy walls, and forced to apply their mind, suffering and repelled, to repugnant studies. Instead of the sweet teachings of their mother, they heard only the disagreeable and monotonous voice of a master hired to repeat to them always the same things. And the ennui which this caused them was punished in them as a fault. If they had the good sense not to understand anything of that nonsense called wise, if their memory relieved itself by forgetting, they were deprived of air and food, they were refused some moments of that recreation which nature made imperiously necessary for them, and they were compelled to expiate their disgust of a repugnant and useless task, by a task more useless and more repugnant still. It was thus their minds were stupified and their hearts obliterated in order to make of them machines for the production of money, and the deaf and dumb slaves of pitiless property.

Jesus comprehended all these distressing things, and saw several of those children, already made old by impiety and disgust, seek in shameful habits an often fatal distraction.

And he said to himself that the children of the rich were not more happy than those of the poor ; this is why, thought he, those are happy whom intelligence and love have freed from the servitude of riches ! The true riches of man are the noble faculties of his soul, when God satisfies and animates them ! The real treasures of man are those which he carries everywhere with him, and which no one can take from him ; the joy of a good conscience, the dignity of a free will, and the noble love of God and of his creatures !

And Jesus passed through the midst of those children, who did not deign to speak to him, because he had the appearance of a child of the people. Others laughed at him as had done the children of the street, and a man who assumed the title of master

did not impose silence on them, but approaching Jesus asked him who he was and how he had entered.

Jesus answered him : " I am the child who teaches masters, and I have come down from Heaven because you have closed your doors against me. I am the truth which judges your teachings, and which has found them to be lies. For, instead of bringing up the children of God for immortality, and of thinking to make them men, you bring them up slaves of the demon of riches for the corruption of all, and you make of them animals with rapacious instincts.

" You think you are the high priests of the sciences, and you are sacrificers to Moloch. You think you have the key of the doors of life, and you open only the gate of hell. You pretend to form men, and you know neither what a man is, nor what are his high destinies.

" And how shall you teach these children whom you know not how to love, and whose wants you do not comprehend ? How can you make the young flower of their thought to bloom in the rays of the sun of God ? You do not see the divine sun, and you tread heavily upon the flowers of life.

" But you cannot even understand my words, and to awaken your heart is required the sweet and insinuating voice of my mother. Come, O Mary ! let your crown of gentle light dissipate by degrees the darkness of their hearts. Men do not know how to love children, it is for a woman to teach them. Come, O model of mothers, console all these poor orphans, instruct those who torment them ! "

After these words, Jesus departed ; and everywhere that he had been seen to pass, appeared, walking in his footsteps, the divine figure of Mary, beautiful with ineffable compassion and radiant with gentleness. She wiped the brow of the poor children of the people, condemned to the pitiless labor of the factories, and embraced them by turns, telling them to take courage and to hope. Then the poor little ones felt their hearts moved, their eyes again found some tears, and they felt themselves happy that they could weep.

Then Mary passed into the prisons where the education of the age enchains its sad captives, and a single smile of her mouth

taught much more to those poor children than all the lessons of their masters, for they remembered their mothers, and they experienced the desire to be better on feeling reawaken within them the necessity of loving.

FOURTH LEGEND.

THE APPRENTICE CARPENTER.

AT that time, Jesus said : "In order to render the condition of the children better, it is first necessary to teach their fathers and their mothers.

"When men shall be associated in their labor, the heaviest burdens will not weigh upon the weakest, and when all shall work, there will be rest for all. Then the rich will no longer torture their own children in order to fit them for unjust domination, and the poor will not be compelled to bend their youngest sons to the sorrows of servitude. For selfish passions will no longer stifle nature, and men will understand that labor is a duty and should never be a punishment. For there is no one to whom Providence has not given more fitness for one function than for another ; and labor ought to be distributed according to the inclinations, and divided according to the strength of each.

"As to education, it ought to be common to all, like the light of the sun, for all desire it and feel the need of it. And when it shall no longer be falsified in its direction and barbarous in its methods, it will be a reward and a happiness for all children."

Jesus said this as he passed near a harbor where the carpenters were at work building a vessel. Some were squaring a large tree which was to be placed at the keel, and others were smoothing and adjusting planks of equal size, to form the sides of the hull. And all worked according to a plan and upon precise measures, in order that the work of one should conform to that of another, and that the whole should be harmoniously composed of all the parts.

Jesus, under the figure of a youth, approached the foreman who had the superintendence of the work, and asked him if he could not give him occupation among his workmen.

The foreman looked at him disdainfully, and said to him : “What use could you be to us ? You are not strong enough ?”

Jesus then noticed ten stout men who could not succeed in lifting an enormous piece of timber, because they distributed their forces badly and did not act together. All the strongest were on one side, and on the other all the weakest ; so that the piece of timber, when raised on one side, threatened to fall on the other, and to crush a part of the workmen.

Jesus approached and said to them : “Brothers, let me help you.”

And they began to laugh, leaving their hard labor in order to wipe the sweat from their brows.

But Jesus spoke to them with so much gentleness that they allowed themselves to be advised by him : he distributed the greatest strength where the weight was most heavy, assigned to each his post, indicating to him the motion he was to make ; he himself then placed his white and delicate hand under the enormous mass and gave the signal. And the mass of timber was raised without effort and as if by a miracle.

Then turning towards the foreman, he said to him : “You see that in association no one is weak ; for he who can do the least with his hands can sometimes do the most by his advice. It is the cooperation of small efforts that determines the greatest movements ; and in order that a small force may become a power, it is only necessary to put it in its true place, so that it may act in harmony with all the other forces.”

Then the workmen said to him : “You are very young ; and we see that you are already passed master in our trade.”

Jesus said to them : “I am an apprentice carpenter ; but I speak to you in the name of supreme wisdom, which is master in all the arts and in all the sciences. When Noah caused to be built the ark, which was to preserve the seeds of a new world, he consulted that supreme wisdom, and by it directed the coöperation of his workmen in the construction of that wonderful vessel.

“But the workmen who had labored in the building of the ark

did not enter it, and perished in the deluge, because they obeyed the man, and did not penetrate the divine thought. Let it not be so with you, for I tell you in truth, that you are all called to the building of a new ark. Be, therefore, intelligent workmen; and be careful to provide a place for yourselves and for your children in the great social vessel, in order that you may not perish when the great storm shall come."

The workmen said to him: "Of what storm do you speak?"

Jesus answered them: "When the wind blows, it must raise, or it must carry away, or it must overturn everything that opposes its passage. If it is thrown back upon the waters, it will upturn the mass of the waters; and if it descends in a whirlwind upon the earth, it will uproot the trees.

"The spirit of God, the spirit of intelligence and of love, is like an impetuous wind, which blows from the east even to the west. It drives before it the clouds of error, shakes the rocks of pride which resist it, and uproots the old beliefs. And those who have thought they could usurp the kingdom of heaven, try to repel it and to drive it back upon the suffering multitudes, as upon the surface of the waters. This is why you must hasten to erect the edifice of salvation, in order that the rising of the waters may not carry you away."

Then the workmen understood his words; and some became pensive, others looked at him with astonishment, while others murmured within themselves, saying: "This young boy is sent here to make us talk:" and they mistrusted him.

But Jesus, taking an axe, began to work with them; and everything that he did was of an admirable precision.

Then he said to them: "If any one requests you to labor for the salvation of your brothers, and does not at the same time put his hand to the work, distrust that man. True love for the people is proved less by words than by deeds. And how will they believe that a man feels for their sufferings, unless he suffers with them? Listen to the advice of those who give you examples, and do not allow yourselves to be enervated and discouraged in the present by thoughts of the future: the future will be the son of the present, and to-morrow will gather what you sow to-day.

“ But take care that envy, or foolish pride, or other bad passions, do not make you despise the advice of those who love you. Recollect what happened to the people who allowed Jesus to be crucified. Know that the spirit of Jesus is always upon the earth, and that often, when you least expect him, he approaches you. Do not say, what right has such a one to teach us ? It is as if you said, what right has he to love us ?

“ Receive truth from love for the truth itself, and be not jealous of him who devotes himself to tell it to you. Listen not to those who seek to depreciate his words, by accusing his person, for the weaknesses of man belong to man, but the word of truth belongs to God. And you must know that it is so much the more divine, because it uses the voice of a more imperfect being, in order that you may not attach yourself to the man who speaks, but only to the truth which he tells you.”

The men of the people, on hearing these words, were seized with respect ; and, looking upon him who spoke to them, it seemed to them that they had already seen him before. Each of them found in him some resemblance to those whom he had loved, and whose affection had rendered his life less bitter. To some, it was the remembrance of a mother ; to others, it was the image of a son, or of a brother, who was no longer in this world ; all felt their hearts moved, and courage and hope were re-awakened in their souls.

Jesus worked with them until their dinner-hour, and, as they rested themselves to eat, he remarked that some had more, the others less ; and he said to them : “ Do you know how the Christ formerly multiplied the loaves to satisfy the people in the desert ? ” They answered him : “ No ; and we do not believe in that miracle, because it appears to us impossible.”

Jesus said to them : “ Put together in common all that you have brought for your dinner, in order that each may have the advantage of what belongs to all ; and you will see that your provisions will be multiplied, for the bread of fraternal communion will be the bond of association, and the seed of future prosperity. And each of you will feel that he ought not to be a burden to the others, and you will be like the earth which receives the grain that is given to it, to render it back a hundred

fold.” Then, having blessed the bread, he broke it, and distributed it among them; and he did the same with the other provisions. And he said to them: “Learn what humanity can do by the labor of its hands.”

Then each offered from his share to his brethren, and no one wished to receive more than he could give in return; seeing which, Jesus said to them: “The kingdom of God is not far from you.” And he left them.

“Will you come back?” cried the workmen. “Yes,” replied he; “if you do as I have told you, you will soon see me again in the midst of you.”

And he left them in their astonishment, not daring to communicate their thoughts to each other; and several said: “If he were not so young, we should think the Christ had again come among us.” Because they did not reflect that the spirit of the Christ is immortal, and cannot grow old.

FIFTH LEGEND.

THE CHILDREN OF SOLOMON.

AFTER that, the Christ took the dress and the figure of a workman, and, carrying his tools on his back and a long cane in his hand, he journeyed.

Now, two workmen, of those who are called Companions of the Devoir,* were travelling in the same direction. They came near him, and made to him the signs of fraternity, to which Jesus replied only by the sign of the cross. The companions began to laugh and to mock at him; they even prepared to maltreat him, and they asked him in a threatening tone, what he meant by what he had just done.

Jesus answered them: “You made to me the sign of the children of Solomon, and I reply to you by the sign of him who

* For an explanation of this Legend, see “The Journeyman Joiner.”

was greater than Solomon. The cross is the square, multiplied and rendered universal. It is the symbol of equality before God, and of the fraternity of all. Solomon built only a temple of stone, and the Christ constructed universal society, that living temple which cements fraternity.

“Why do you ask me to what *devoir* (duty) I belong? There is but one duty for all the children of the Father: it is to assist each other mutually, and to love each other, as the Father who is in heaven watches over them all and loves them.”

The workmen replied: “We do not like the sign of the cross, and no longer believe in the virtue which was formerly attributed to it; for bad priests have made of it their sign, and have abused it, while they taught superstition and falsehood.”

Jesus said to them: “If brigands, while endeavoring to kill you, should pronounce the name of your mother, would that be a reason for no longer loving your mother? The priests and the pharisees used the cross to put the Christ to death, and their successors have wished still to use it for the execution of the people whom the Christ came to save. But the Christ, in triumphing over the world by the cross, made the very instrument of his execution a sign of deliverance and salvation; and that sign should cause bad priests and bad kings to tremble; for it is the sign of rallying for those whom the glorious death of the Christ, their brother, has rendered free.

“Brothers, do not renounce the cross; for it is by it that you will be strong, and that you will conquer.”

“Do you then despise the square of Solomon?” asked the companions of the *devoir*.

“The square of Solomon is the symbol of a relative equality, and its branches embrace only one side of the humanitarian edifice; unite two squares together, so that one may open its branches to the side of the east and the other to the side of the west, and you will therewith form a cross.”

The two companions, who were men of sense, admired Jesus in their hearts, saying to him: “We like to hear you. You are wiser than we, and you must teach us.”

Jesus asked them: “What is your religion?”

“My parents were protestants,” said the first.

"Mine were catholics," said the other; "but I never go to church."

"Do you know what the words, Catholic Church, mean?" asked the Christ. And as they were embarrassed for an answer, he added: "They mean universal association. This is what the Christ intended to introduce upon the earth, and the hierarchical society of the priests was only an imperfect model of the true universal Church. The error of the priests has been in wishing to render immutable and eternal that which was only transitory. They have built for themselves alone, a house according to the plans of the Christian architecture, and they have not reflected that the Church should be the house of the whole of humanity. This is why their house will be left to them, and they will die in it alone and deserted, while humanity will construct the great universal temple, of which Solomon's was formerly the first figure.

"The priests, in the primitive Church, were only the wise men and the elders to whom the people confided the presidency of their assemblages. Are there no wise men among you? and is there any necessity for you to seek the fathers of the people out of the ranks of the people?

"Reflect that the ministry of mediation between God and man is the work of the most perfect devotedness. If there be among you a man who loves truth more than life, and his brothers more than himself, that man is worthy to preside over you; and it is he who should explain to you the things that are of God.

"For he knows enough about religion, who knows how to love good and truth above all things, and his neighbor more than himself. Religion was not given for the priests, but for the people; and the people are not the servants of the priests, but, on the contrary, it is the priests who should be the servants of the people."

Then the companions replied to Jesus: "Your words please us, however new and singular they may be; but we no longer wish to have priests among us: for their very name excites in us abhorrence and disgust."

Jesus said to them: "Those whom you hate on account of their name call themselves priests and are so no longer, for they have been punished wherein they have sinned. They wished to

conceal the spirit of wisdom contained in the symbols of the doctrine, and the spirit of wisdom has departed from them. They wished to keep the people in ignorance and superstition, and now they are themselves more ignorant and more superstitious than the lowest among the people. They have renounced loving and being loved in order to make themselves feared, and now they are no longer feared and they are not loved.

“Remember what the Christ said when speaking of the doctors of the ancient synagogue: ‘The pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, do therefore what they teach you, but do not imitate their works; for they say and do not.’”

One of the workmen then said: “Why need we go and hear hypocrites and liars? we much prefer to be taught by those who believe what they say, and who practise what they teach.”

Then Jesus: “That is a good thought, but know that the first Christians continued to respect the old temple, even while working for the construction of the new Church. This is why I say to you: do not hate the pharisees and the doctors of the catholic church; leave them to their impotence; they can no longer do you either good or harm, because they have no longer either intelligence or love.

“This is why I say to you still further: build up the new society, the great universal association, the communion of all with all, and of all with each. Let those among you who have intelligence and devotedness be the fathers and the elders, to teach, to direct and to console; and you will thus institute a new priesthood.

“It is not years which make a man old in wisdom, it is thoughts and works. And he who has thought most wisely and acted most justly, he has lived the longest. Be therefore young men when action is required, and old men when advice is needed.”

After these words, Jesus said no more and continued walking with them. Now, the two companions also kept a profound silence and asked themselves: “Whence has this man so much knowledge and wisdom? For he speaks to us with authority, and seems so certain of what he says that we are compelled to believe him.”

Then two other journeymen belonging to another profession,

came by the same road and were about to pass the three travellers. Those who walked with Jesus said to him : " We shall be obliged to fight ; they are but two and we are three, but you were not with us and you can stand aside."

Jesus said to them : " Why should you fight ? Are those men enemies or malefactors ? It seems to me that they are honest workmen like yourselves. What ! because they are of one trade and you of another, must you rend each other like furious beasts !

" If the carpenter exterminates the stone cutter, how can he himself live ? Does not the carpenter's work support and strengthen the stones of a building ? If he who makes garments triumphs over him who makes shoes, how shall he be shod ? and if it is the shoemaker who kills the tailor, how shall he be clothed ?

" You have all need, each of the other ; and you hate each other only because you are members of separate societies ; unite your societies into a single one, instead of fighting, and cause universal union to take the place of separate associations."

As Jesus was still speaking, the two new comers drew near, but they were not willing to listen any longer, and raised their sticks to commence the attack. Then the two companions of the Christ stood on their defence, but Jesus, placing himself between them, stretched out his arms and said to them : " You shall not fight, or you must strike me ; for you are brothers ; and if I cannot prevent you from doing harm, I prefer to be your victim rather than your accomplice."

" Stand aside ! stand aside !" cried the four journeymen brandishing their canes ; and as he did not stand aside, they struck, and the blood flowed down the face of the Christ.

At this sight a sudden stupor paralysed the arms of the combatants ; the head of the wounded man seemed to be surrounded by a glory, he cast upon them a sad glance which penetrated to their very heart, and said, as he took his blood in his hands and showed it to them : " How many times then shall I be obliged to die for you ?"

Then under the fresh blood which they had caused to flow, the journeymen recognised the ancient cicatrices, and the Christ,

being transfigured before their eyes, appeared to them under the lamentable form of the Ecce Homo.

They fell upon their knees ; and the Christ, raising his eyes towards Heaven, repeated once again his sublime prayer : “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Then he took their hands and joined them together, saying to them : “ Instead of being two on one side and two on the other, be four together : you will be four times as strong ! Meditate well upon this saying, and if you are intelligent, understand it.” Then, having blest them, he disappeared from their eyes.

Then the four journeymen swore not to separate before they had laid the foundations of universal union. And they promised to help each other until death, consecrating their entire life to form a union between the children of Solomon, of Hiram and of the other ancient architects of the temple, in order to induce them to work all together for universal association, and for the ultimate formation of the great family of the children of the Christ.

SIXTH LEGEND.

THE DAUGHTERS OF MAGDALEN.

SHORTLY after this, the Christ remembered the woman of Samaria and Magdalen the sinner, to whom many sins were forgiven because she had loved much. And he, who had not disdained to descend even into hell, to deliver the souls of those whom he had ransomed, went in the evening through the streets of the great city, seeking the poor sinning women.

And on seeing them wander about by the light of the lamps, with a smile on their lips and death in their heart, with flowers on their brow and their feet in the mud, he wept, thinking of Mary. And he looked at them with ineffable sadness, at the thought that each of those unfortunates had a soul and a heart.

One of them having approached him, he looked at her sorrowfully and said : “ My daughter, what do you desire of me ?”

"That thou wouldst forgive me," replied she; for she had recognised him.

Jesus said to her: "You know me because you have suffered much: poor child, what can I do for you? I can forgive you, but how can I enable you to forgive yourself? Did not my father create you to live pure and to become a mother? How then have you fallen into this horribly abject condition?"

"Because I could no longer live, and because I had not strength enough to die," replied the poor woman weeping.

"And in order to live you have condemned yourself to die every day," said Jesus to her; "what then did you find so desirable in life?"

"Master," returned she, "when men pay me that they may outrage me, it is not I who am guilty of the evil which they do to me; but if I had laid violent hands on myself, I should have been obliged to answer before God for the crime of my death."

"Woman, you reason justly," said Jesus. "You were weak, and society did not support you: therefore you are a living accusation against it, and each of your humiliations shall be punished as a homicide. For each of those men who think they can possess you for a vile price, has had a mother; and he does not reflect that heaven had destined you also to be a mother. He has perhaps had a sister, and he does not reflect that you might be his sister. Sometimes he has even a betrothed; and he does not ask himself what he would suffer if any one should thus degrade his betrothed. For every woman is a betrothed of humanity; and to each of them had God destined a husband.

"Withdraw therefore from me, O my poor child! for my presence does you harm and covers you with shame: you would wish to love me and you dare not look upon me, because I am the pure man and you are the poor degraded woman.

"No, do not look at me, poor humiliated woman; but look at my image nailed to the cross, and hope. For I do not break the bruised reed, and I do not tread under foot the still smoking flax.

"The world despises you, because it has made you impure, and it despised me because I was pure. You see then that its judgments are iniquitous, and that they ought not to drive you to despair.

“Poor creature ! who, because you were weak, suffer now what would terrify the strongest natures ! Do not fear my reproaches ; I do not wish to add them to the regrets of your heart. The world has broken you, that is why I will have pity on you. When I was expiring on the cross, I saw at my feet Magdalen the sinner ; and I was happy to die for her. For I love those whom the world abandons, and I bless those whom it outrages.

“Depart, my daughter ; and enclose your sorrow in your soul, like a hope. Weep inwardly, when the sad necessities of your life compel you to smile ; for you have no chastity henceforth but in the tears of your heart.

“Never prostitute your soul, in order that your body may be purified by destruction ; and that the remembrance of your fall may perish with your perishable form in the forgetfulness of the grave. The soul is immortal, and its sorrowful aspirations after virtue will live with it ; the body is mortal, and the faults which come from it and are attached to it will go with it into death.

“Poor angel fallen into hell, be not therefore tired with looking towards heaven, and do not despair of your salvation, for those who have destroyed you are more criminal than you : and you would have a right to cry out for vengeance against them.”

“I forgive them,” replied the woman ; “for if they were better they would be happier ; and how could they have been good to me, when they do not yet know how to be good to themselves ?”

“Go in peace, my daughter, and hope for your deliverance,” then said the Christ. “You have not been virtuous, and perhaps that is the world’s fault more than your own ; but you are good, and that belongs to your heart and the world cannot take it from you. God will forgive you as you forgive those who have injured you. Be courageous then and try to free yourself from vice. Let no labor repel you ; for you have suffered something still more severe : let no effort be too great for you ; for you have needed many efforts to resign yourself to your abject condition.

“Courage ! my daughter, rise up and hope ! let your heart be pure in the first place : form again a virginity in your soul and God will not desert you.

“The world will never forgive you, because, being more criminal than you, it has neither the right nor the generosity of

forgiveness. But God will love you as a father loves his prodigal son, and your very faults, which repentance will make eternal sources of sorrow for you, will become for you expiatory sufferings and claims to the crown of martyrdom.”

Having said these words, the Christ departed, for the poor woman sobbed and could no longer listen to him.

Jesus afterwards passed before other women who did not recognise him, and to whom he did not speak, because they were brutified by vice and contented in their abjectness, from love of disorder and hatred of good. He looked upon them as diseased persons fallen into delirium and prayed silently for them.

He saw others whose life was a continued drunkenness, and who intoxicated themselves in order to forget ; and he compared them to those unfortunates who have lost their reason ; but he pitied them the more because their madness was voluntary.

But he cursed none of those women, because they were all unhappy. He pitied them, on the contrary, and loved them, because no one loves them.

But there were men who passed in the street and who insulted those unfortunates. Jesus approached them and said to them : “ You doubtless are modest, since you insult these women who have lost their modesty. You doubtless know the sanctity of love, since you insult these women who sell their deplorable complaisance. You doubtless respect the sex of your mother and of her who is or who will be the mother of your children, since you thus despise these poor women, who have lost all their maternal dignity.”

“ What is that to you ? ” replied those men rudely. “ We do what pleases us ; go your ways. Are you the defender of these creatures ? ”

Jesus said to them : “ If these creatures are despicable, what name shall be given to you, to you who degrade them ? For it is of your brutality that they are made the servants ; and if there were no men like you, there would be no women like them.

“ Now, you know that, according to the law of nature, the husband is the head of the conjugal society, and that he answers before men even for the disorders of his wife.

“ Now, I tell you that, before God, the legitimate wife of the

debauchee is the prostitute, and that he ought to be branded before men with all the disorders of her whom he habitually makes his companion.

“Now, as each man who unites himself intimately with a woman, makes but one with her, when you outrage these poor creatures, your insults fall back upon yourselves and you alone deserve them.”

On hearing this discourse, those men were filled with confusion and bit their tongue with anger, but no one of them dared to insult or threaten Jesus, for he spoke boldly to them, and those who can insult women are naturally cowards.

They murmured among themselves and stammered insults and rude railleries in a low voice. But Jesus turned his back upon them and departed. And they did not suspect who it was that had just spoken to them.

SEVENTH LEGEND.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

At that time Jesus wished to converse with those who said they were devoted to the redemption of the people. But before manifesting himself to them, he wished to know their most secret thoughts; and making himself present to them by the virtue of his spirit, he listened to the words of their hearts.

He especially interrogated those who should be the ministers of the word, the men whose writings are multiplied every day like the leaves of the trees, and he sought for a belief and a thought at the bottom of the heart of those men. He saw them put on and put off their maxims like a livery, defend and attack the same thing by turns with the same indifference, for to the greater number among them nothing was true and nothing was false.

He saw the fiercest defenders of the popular cause, full of contempt for the people, and burning with a low envy which made

them the enemies of the great, because they themselves thirsted for riches and greatness. He saw them write upon their banner names which they themselves despised. For these men knew themselves too well to have any confidence in each other, and they no longer believed even in themselves, for they doubted everything, having lost faith and not having found science : as some must indeed reign and others obey, they protested against obedience in the hope of reigning, and each helped the other, in order to succeed by his means ; but they detested each other, and were all jealous of each other in the depths of their heart.

Jesus saw them, understood them, and did not go near to speak to them or to manifest himself to them ; for those unfortunates could neither see nor hear him.

Then having turned away his eyes, he sought the men of the people who were assembled in secret like the Christians in the times of the Catacombs ; there at least he saw noble hearts and generous aspirations, but nowhere was there any agreement about the choice or the employment of means, because the flock of the future had not yet found its shepherds. The greatest confusion prevailed in ideas ; and the wills, instead of being united, were divided more and more, and opposed mutual obstacles ; each one wished to bring forward his system, and the systems destroyed each other ; the time of faith and of common beliefs seemed to be for ever passed, and no fixed and durable light as yet replaced the extinguished faith ; thus the natural heat of souls destroyed them without producing brightness, and was exhausted without being communicated to other souls which were cold and which languished in darkness.

Jesus assumed the appearance of a man of the people, and entered at evening into a low hall where were assembled some writers and working men, who were talking of reform without coming to any understanding, because the emissaries of the political parties agitated them in a contrary direction.

Jesus then rose in the midst and said to them : “ For what purpose have you come here ? Have you come to dispute about words which you do not understand, and to listen to men who seek to glorify themselves ? Have you come to build up or to destroy ? To unite or to divide ? To deliberate or to dispute ?

“Mistrust those men who, under pretext of zeal for your interests, bring to you only bitter recriminations; those who speculate upon principles in favor of such or such a name; those who address themselves only to hateful and jealous passions. Banish from among you those who speak incessantly of themselves and who underhandedly calumniate your friends and your defenders.”

At these words, there was a great tumult in the assembly; a part of those who were there, shouted in order to drown the voice of the Christ, and calling him traitor and false brother, they wished to drive him out.

Then Jesus said: “Bad passions betray themselves. Let the men of good faith, the friends of good order be silent and remain calm; they will be recognised by this sign, and the meeting will be purified.”

More than half the assembly then seated themselves and kept silence; while the agitators, furious at seeing themselves thus recognised, burst out into threats and insults. Jesus remained seated in the midst of the honest workmen, who kept calm and silent like him, and they preserved a deep silence. Seeing which, those men who were violent and of bad faith, left the assembly.

Then Jesus said to those who remained: “Brothers, when the first Christians met in secret assemblages, it was not to dispute, but to commune together in the spirit of fraternity and of justice. You suffer greatly, I know: society is harsh and unjust towards you, I know that also; but you form a part of society. Be good towards each other, and society will be less harsh; be yourselves just in the first place, and injustice will be diminished. Know that disorder always produces a greater disorder, and that evil never remedies evil.

“Do you know why the wicked rich oppress you? It is because they do not recognise you as their brothers, having had the misfortune to forget God and the teachings of the Christ. They are unjust, because they have no other moral law than their avarice and their pride: beware therefore of pride and avarice; for these vices produce in their conflicts only the alternations of tyranny and slavery. In order to be free, you must first be liberated from all the bad passions which enslave the heart and de-

prave the understanding. Do not conspire in darkness against men ; conspire in broad daylight against vice.

“ Exercise a fraternal watchfulness over each other ; reprimand in your meetings the intemperate, the brutal, and the idle ; give public eulogiums to labor, to devotedness, and to correct morals. The people will be strong when they are good and just. Let them cease to be minors, and their guardian will be compelled to render his accounts to them. Lions are not harnessed to the cart, and eagles are not fed in the poultry yards with domestic fowls.

“ But so long as you are neither wise enough nor strong enough to reign yourselves, obey your kings and your chiefs, and pray to God that he will preserve them for you, because the people always suffer in revolutions and never gain by a change of masters.”

The workmen, hearing this, murmured among themselves and said : “ Is not this man an emissary of the government ? ” And they began to retire, one after the other.

Jesus, continuing his discourse, said to them : “ How can you be free, if you know not how to discern the true from the false, and the good from the evil ? How can you get out of slavery, if you calumniate those who love you, and if you refuse to hear those who tell you the truth ?

“ Because the government is in fact stronger than you, and because I advise you not to crush yourselves by rushing against it, you say that I am an emissary of your enemies ! And when I trace out for you the path by which you can attain the royalty of free men, you accuse me of being a servant of the government ! You see well that you are not yet in a condition to reign, for you wish to be flattered and not to be taught : you have the usual weakness of tyrants.”

When the Christ had made an end of speaking, he looked around him, and saw that all had departed, excepting three young men, who listened to him with respect.

Jesus said to them : “ You are then the only ones who have understood me ? Well ! go now and announce to your brethren what you have heard, and do not despair of the salvation of humanity.

“First free the world which is in yourselves; be men, and you will be free! For all slavery is voluntary. No one can degrade those who are not willing to be degraded. God himself, with all his power, could not compel the will of a little child.”

“We wish to be free!” then said the three young men with energy.

“Well! persevere in that will, and you shall be more than kings,” replied Jesus.

And they separated.

EIGHTH LEGEND.

THE NEW ADULTEROUS WOMAN.

AT that time Jesus clothed himself with all the majesty of the perfect man; and as he had formerly awaited the Samaritan woman at the edge of Jacob's well, so he went and seated himself in a retired spot of a public garden.

Now, a woman who had seen him pass had followed him at a distance, and she approached him in order to see if he would not speak to her; but Jesus did not even look at her.

Now, that woman was deeply agitated in her heart, and could not turn away her eyes from that radiant figure. She recognised the Christ because she had seen him in all her dreams, and she ardently desired that he would look at her; but she did not dare to speak to him the first, because she feared his contempt.

Nevertheless the Lord had pity on the anguish of the woman, and praying inwardly to his Father, he said: “O my God! deliver women from adultery, in order that the generations may no longer be poisoned at their source! O my God! have pity on the tears of my mother, who prays for the liberation of mothers, and restore chastity to this corrupted world!”

Then, addressing the woman, with a gentle and grave countenance, he asked her if she wished to speak to him.

The woman replied blushing that she had nothing to say to him ; but she remained near him, confused, trembling, and yet charmed at having heard his voice.

“ Well, I, my daughter, have something to say to you,” said the Saviour, “ sit down by my side.”

“ I cannot,” said the woman, “ for I fear that my husband may see me.”

“ Then you are doing something wrong ?” asked Jesus.

“ Perhaps so,” replied the woman, “ and yet it seems to me that I have confidence in you, and the feeling which retains me by your side in spite of myself is very pure. I do not think I have ever seen you before, and already it seems to me that I have known you for a long while, and that you have always been good to me. I feel no shame at letting you see the condition of my heart. I only fear your contempt, for I am the wife of another.”

“ And that other, have you loved him ?” asked Jesus.

“ Never,” replied the woman, casting down her eyes.

“ And how could you promise fidelity to him whom you did not love ? For fidelity is only the voluntary guarantee of a mutual love. You therefore deceived a man who loved you, by pretending to give to him that which was not yours, and which could never be his ?”

“ He himself did not love me,” again murmured the woman.

“ He married me for the sake of the money which my parents gave him with me, in exchange for his name and his credit.”

“ And thus you became adulterous ?” said the Christ looking at her.

“ Oh ! no, never !” returned she earnestly. “ To-day is the first time that an invincible attraction has made me speak with freedom to another man ; but now, were it not for the confidence and the respect with which your physiognomy inspires me, I should not have approached you. I knew well that you would despise me,” added she, bowing her head, and the tears flowed from her eyes.

“ Woman,” said the Christ to her, “ you are not culpable for having loved, but indeed for having given yourself to him whom you did not love. Know that God had betrothed you from your

birth by the attractions which he placed in the depths of your heart. He whom you were to love, he whom you dreamt of, he whose image I recall to you, he alone was your true husband, and during his absence you were sold like a slave, and you contracted an adulterous alliance with another.

“Do you no longer remember the words of the Christ? The man shall forget his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife. This means that conjugal affection shall be more tender than filial love, and shall prevail over all the affections. For God from the beginning has predestined man and woman to be united. What God has joined together let man never put asunder!

“But tell me, woman: is it by bargains of traffic and of avarice that God unites wills, and do you believe that the demon of riches can accomplish the work of holy and legitimate love? Does not man separate what God wishes to unite, when he sells his daughters and when he buys a wife?

“I do not reproach you, my daughter, for you were not free, and according to the laws which they have made, you were compelled to obey. Resistance would have been death to you; and all souls have not the courage of martyrdom.

“Do not curse your parents, but pray God to forgive them, for they prostituted you to their interest and their pride.

“Know only that on the day when what men call your marriage was accomplished, the angels of heaven veiled themselves with their wings and wept over you, for you had become an adulterous woman. You were unfaithful to the sweet dream of your heart, you abjured the alliance hidden in your soul, you outraged divine maternity.”

“Spare me!” said the woman in a supplicating voice, and clasping her hands.

“Woman,” returned Jesus, “I have already told you: it is not I who accuse you, it is you who might accuse the world.

“For all those who consent to evil commit evil, and all those who are the slaves of riches, all those who esteem gold more than liberty and more than love, all those who are indignant at this venality of the world, and who do not protest loudly against the universal corruption; those who do not think of it and who are

satisfied with laughing at it; all these are the accomplices of him who bought you and of those who sold you.

“This is why, if no one formerly had the right to cast the first stone at the unfaithful woman, because all had sinned, at this day the woman whom they have made adulterous can rise up before the throne of God and accuse them in her turn with sobs and tears. And I tell you in truth that each of her tears will be equal in value to a drop of the blood of the Redemption, and that her sobs will impose silence before God on the clamors of hell!”

Then he added in a gentler voice: “Woman, the human word is sacred as the divine word, and the slave who has sold himself has no longer the right to flee; otherwise he would be perjured and a robber. Let the faithfulness of your word expiate the unfaithfulness of your heart.

“Do not reproach yourself for loving me: you may do so, for soon you will see me no longer, and you will seek me in your dreams.

“I am the husband of isolated souls; I am the man of the future!

“It is I who am the betrothed of virgins, and the consoler of widows!

“I am the husband promised by the celestial poetry of Solomon to the woman purified by trial and freed by sorrow!

“Let us love each other, poor slave! and be resigned while awaiting your freedom; but if you have daughters, never sell them, and do not sacrifice them to alliances which heaven looks upon with horror.

“Labor for the destruction of sin, in order that God may forgive your fault; and if you wish again to see my image, in order to encourage you to suffer—look upon the cross.”

At this last word, the woman was seized with affright, and, raising her eyes, she saw no one.

She fell upon her knees, by the side of the bench where she had seen the Saviour seated, and clasping her hands, she wept bitterly.

Several men then approached without her perceiving them: it was her husband, who was looking for her, accompanied by

several witnesses, and who said to them, pointing at her : “ You see that she has become crazy ; you will testify for me.”

Then they seized her, and she allowed herself to be led away without understanding what they wished ; but when she saw that her husband was about to put her in confinement, in order to get rid of her, she thought that she would, at least, be delivered from adultery and prostitution : she preferred to be the victim of that man, rather than to continue his accomplice, and when she was questioned, she replied that she had seen the Christ, and related all that the Saviour had said to her. Then the physicians and the judges decided that she had lost her reason, and she was shut up in a hospital for the insane. There she consoled herself by thinking that she should not be a mother, and that she should bring no daughters into the world : she was buried alive in that terrible tomb, and of all that had belonged to her, she asked only for her mother’s crucifix.

NINTH LEGEND.

THE HOUSE OF THE INSANE.

At that time, Jesus, wishing to compel the insanity of the age to condemn itself by declaring its aversion to wisdom, entered into a house where a large number of persons were assembled, and, raising his voice, he spoke thus to them :

“ For what purpose have you come together in this house, when your minds are divided, and when your hearts separate more and more from each other ? Why do you salute each other with a gracious countenance, when, at the bottom of your heart, you desire each other’s death ?”

And, as they murmured at these words, Jesus added : “ Who is there among you that would not take the fortune and the dignities of another, if he could do so with impunity ? Now, to wish to strip one’s brother of that which makes his life, is not this to desire his death ?”

“What do you seek with so much trouble? What do you conceal with so much care? What do you desire as the reward of so many efforts? You wear out your life, you brutalize your soul, you destroy your heart, to attain an object which you yourselves do not understand. You seek happiness at the expense of happiness; you sacrifice your life to live; you devour your entrails to appease your hunger.

“Your whole life is a lie: you voluntarily imprison yourselves in constraint and ennui; you sell your eternity to buy death, and you resemble the sick man in delirium, who dreams of journeys or of pleasures during the exhaustion of his agony.

“What good does it do you to gain the universe while you lose your soul? Is a corpse happy, then, upon a throne? and when you have no longer either belief or love, of what use to you is the homage of men whom you despise, and the attentions of those poor women whom you do not love and who do not love you?

“Is not vainglory a derision to him who has raised himself by crawling? and can he believe himself superior to those who debase themselves to-day as he debased himself yesterday? What can be done with riches by the man who has killed his heart, and reduced himself to animal life? Are not the necessities of animals limited, and does not every excess carry with it its lassitude and its punishment?

“Go, then, servants of this world, sacrifice yourselves for this ungrateful master; abjure everything that makes the joy of the soul; renounce everything that makes the life of the heart; then, when you shall be such as you must be to reign over it, you will yourselves reject with disgust what it will have left you of corpse-like existence, and extinction will be your last hope.”

As Jesus spoke thus, the master of the house sent for his servants to drive him out; “for,” said he, “a crazy man has entered our saloon, and his craziness being very sad, he must be led away, and placed in the hands of the police, in order that he may be confined in a house of the insane.”

But Jesus, understanding their thought, said to them: “You send me to the house of the insane, and I leave you in your own house.

“Henceforth you will not imprison me any more than you can

imprison thought. I am no longer a man ; I am the type and the ideal of the human form. Violence can never seize upon me to make me die. You will not confine me, you whom the insanity of riches binds with chains of gold ; but if you remember my words and if you recover your senses, my word will make you free."

As he said this, all who were there shrugged their shoulders and laughed ; and the servants, having approached to seize him, dared not lay hands on him. But Jesus went out and departed from that assembly.

He walked through the city, and saw men who worked from morning to night in order to live, and who had never asked themselves of what use life could be.

Others, who lived by fraud and shameful trafficking, extinguishing the last spark of their soul every day in infamy, as if they had hired themselves to corruption and death.

He saw others, the whole of whose existence was a lie ; and when he sought what truth they could conceal with so much care and so much difficulty, he found none.

Some loved without being loved, and, on that very account, persisted in loving more ; others prided themselves in loving nothing, and they stupefied themselves in order that they might not see themselves alone, for they were afraid of themselves.

There were some who drank and sang in order to swallow their tears and to conceal their sobs.

Others ran about at night, disguised in strange habiliments ; they met in vast halls illuminated by brilliant lights : there they insulted each other with a laugh, assembled by chance, danced, stamped, shouted, rushed together pell-mell. There were prepared prostitution and debauchery ; there youth rapidly grew old ; there intellect was extinguished and lost for ever. This was called diversion. Mothers permitted their sons to go there, and men often themselves conducted thither women whom they pretended to love.

In all that great city, in fine, the least wicked and the most wise were those who lived like animals. The others were demons.

Jesus then said to himself : " All these men are devoid of

sense, and they confine in a pretended house of the insane those who do not think like them. I will therefore go into the house of the insane and will there seek for wisdom."

And as he is the physician of souls, he took the appearance of a physician, and went to the hospital for the insane.

The first whom he met there said to him: "I am a king." And Jesus said: "Many other men pretend the same thing. The only difference between them and this one is, that their peculiar fantasy is contagious, and that they find a people to believe them."

Another then approached and said: "I am God!" "All the wise men of the age say the same thing," replied Jesus. "Why then do they consider you insane?"

"It is because I am not willing to adore them," replied the crazy man; "being unable and unwilling to adore any other than myself."

"They are all like you," said Jesus to him; "only they do not say it, and pretend to adore others in order to be adored in their turn."

"They feel then very plainly that they are not God, and they pretend to be God in spite of their own conscience," replied the crazy man triumphantly. "They have therefore confined me from envy and because I alone, among them all, was wise!"

"No, but they were more insane than you," said Jesus, "and they are so still."

There came another and said: "I am not God, but I wish to do what God has not yet done: I wish to secure the happiness of men."

Jesus looked at him with a melancholy air and said: "Do you know what it costs and how much time is required to succeed?"

"Trouble and time are nothing," replied the insane man. "Truth is a seed which germinates slowly, but which infallibly bears its fruit. I have discovered the two great laws of nature: the unity of substance and the harmony of the movement which modifies it. That movement is the music of God which vibrates by octaves; the highest notes correspond with the lowest by innumerable scales of which analogy is the key. Let man understand the work of God, and imitate it in his social arrangements.

This is the realization of the Gospel and the salvation of the world."

Jesus replied to him : "Temples are still being built. I would that the words you have just uttered could be deeply engraved on a tablet of brass, and that tablet be buried under the foundation of the last church that shall be built. When it shall be brought to light some day, men will perhaps understand what you have just said ; but if you continue to talk thus, you will die here, and no one in the world will be interested in you during your life or will remember you after your death."

"Excepting God," said the insane man.

"And myself," added the Christ, and he clasped the hand of the poor insane man.

Then he approached another who had been chained, because he was considered dangerous. This one wept with indignation and repeated : "They have disposed of me and I did not belong to them : I have labored and they have consumed the fruits of my labor ; they have eaten my flesh and my blood. The earth belongs to God, who loans it to all his children, and they say : 'The earth belongs to us !' And because those brigands are the strongest, they make the children of God die of hunger ! The robbers possess the world ; and of their robbery they have made the basis of their laws and their morality. Oh ! if the poor should one day be tired of suffering and should unite for vengeance !"

"Hold your tongue," then cried the hoarse voice of a keeper to the furious man, "hold your tongue, or you shall be gagged again."

"Will that prove that you and your masters are not robbers and assassins ?" cried the insane man with still increasing excitement.

"It will prove that you must hold your tongue," said the keeper ; and, with the assistance of two or three of his fellows, he approached the crazy man and gagged him with the greater facility because his feet and his hands were fastened to rings of iron.

Jesus passed near him and pacified him by a look, but he did not speak to him, for there is always a kind of insult in the words which are addressed to one who cannot answer ; but he said to the keeper : "It is by embittering this man with cruel treatment

that you make him furious. Be more humane towards him, and his poor heart will be pacified ; for I tell you in truth that his madness is only the love of justice carried to extreme, and the more he is tormented, the more dangerous and incurable will his malady become.

“ Only pray to God that it may not be contagious, and may not spread among the people, for then there would be a horrible convulsion, like that of the last judgment, and heaven and earth would be shaken by it.”

Having said these things, Jesus stretched out his hand over those poor suffering heads, and he spoke in secret to all those broken hearts.

Then they forgot for a moment their miseries and their furies ; they thought they heard voices which came from heaven. Some wept, and their tears did them good ; others, more happy, fell asleep and dreamt that they were dead.

TENTH LEGEND.

THE HEIRS OF PILATE.

THERE was at that time a merchant who passed for a model of integrity and justice ; the strictest probity had always governed him in his transactions ; he never received more than was due to him, and was contented, for his profit, with what was conformable to the usual laws of trade, and authorized by custom.

All his fellow merchants laughed at him and predicted his speedy ruin. Nevertheless, contrary to their expectation, not only was he not ruined, but he prospered and grew rich.

He was quite intelligent in matters of business, but there his genius stopped ; he did not wish to do evil, but neither did he know how to do good. He had wished to make for himself a good reputation, in order that he might afterwards esteem himself according to the reputation he should have made, for he needed the

opinion of others in order to regulate his own, like persons who have a watch, and cannot tell the hour by the sun.

Now, this man, who knew not how to judge himself, was called upon to judge others, because he had money. He therefore went to the tribunal, and listened to the arguments in the cause as well as he could. The case was as follows :

A woman who was intelligent and of an elevated genius, yielding to the corruption of the age and prostituting herself to the attraction of riches, had married before men one whom, before God, she could never love.

At the moment of undergoing the profanation of her modesty, she had a horror of her fault and refused what was required of her.

Having arrived at the house of the man whom she ought never to have called her husband, she confessed to him her remorse and her disgust, asked of him in mercy to let her escape, and offered to him, in exchange for her liberty, all that she possessed in the world. She was not allowed to depart, she was kept as a captive, and he whom she could not look upon without disgust at last compelled her to yield to what he thought he could call his right. The wife resigned herself, but, after some time, the husband was attacked by strange pains and died.

It was supposed that the woman must have hated that man enough to attempt his life ; it was believed that she might have become criminal from despair, so much was she known to have suffered. Besides, the superiority of her intellect had made enemies of those whom envy made her oppressors, and she was accused of the most cowardly of crimes.

That was alleged against her which should have justified her ; the indications which accused her were so grossly evident that they betrayed a foreign hand. Besides, had the victim been really poisoned ? Poison was found everywhere, except in the body ; science doubted and contradicted itself, but the morality of the world has also its fanaticism : it was pretended that if this woman should be acquitted, all family and social bonds would be broken. It was then that the honest merchant of whom we have spoken was called, with several other inhabitants of the same city, to decide upon the fate of the accused.

Not daring to condemn her absolutely, when so many reasons were presented in her favor, nor to acquit her, because they believed society threatened with so serious a danger, those men dared to decide that the unfortunate was culpable, but that with her crime were connected circumstances which diminished its horror.

They did not think that if the crime had been committed, the most cowardly hypocrisy had prepared it, the blackest perfidy had consummated it, the most audacious perversity had denied it, by making a jest of everything that is sacred in heaven and upon earth ; and, by a contradictory decision, human justice seemed, in these unheard of circumstances, to condemn innocence and to acquit guilt.

The virtuous merchant returned home with a quiet heart, after having coöperated in this judgment ; still, he dared not embrace his wife, and his children seemed to him sad when they came to meet him.

However, he took his meal as usual, but involuntarily shuddered several times when his wife offered him drink. At night, he retired early ; and, when he was alone in his chamber, he was suddenly seized with fear, for it seemed to him that he heard some one walking behind him, and he knew that no one could have entered the chamber.

Then he turned round trembling, and saw near him the Christ, who looked upon him with a sad and severe countenance. The Christ appeared to him such as he was formerly seen before Pilate, clothed in the white robe which Herod had caused to be thrown over him, his face furrowed with blood and with tears, his arms bound and his hands tied in the knots of a disgraceful rope.

“ I come,” said he to the merchant, “ to be judged again by you, for half the world have protested against my condemnation, while the other half still say that I was a criminal.

“ You who dare to affirm when others doubt, I come to ask of you if you approve the sentence of Pilate ? of that judge who thought he could wash his hands with water, after having bathed them perchance in innocent blood ?

“ Unfortunate ! you see the knife suspended over a head, and,

according to your feeble intellect, when reason dares not determine, you decide that the knife must fall, and you pronounce the fatal word, without ever asking yourself if society be not solidary in the crimes of its unhappy children, and if, in passing that sentence of death, you did not condemn yourself.

“But these thoughts disturb you in spite of yourself, and arise in your bosom unconsciously to you ; doubt causes the sentence to expire on your lips : you condemn and you excuse at the same time ; you say yes and no in the same breath, and the judgments you venture to deliver resemble the blind blows of a confused assassin, who turns away his head and strikes at random.”

“Master,” said the juryman trembling, “why do you address me alone, when so many others do like me and think they act conscientiously ?”

“Because you have the reputation of a just man, above all the others,” said Jesus to him, “and I knock at that door which I think will be opened.”

“But what must I do, Lord ?” asked the merchant, hiding his face in his hands.

“Never decide unfavorably when you can doubt,” said the Christ, “and impose upon yourself the duty of saving a man every time the sentence shall have condemned one. For I tell you in truth, that my Father will require of you an account of all the victims of society, if, in the place of the heads which shall fall, you do not present to him joyous and grateful heads. Each time, therefore, that you shall help to send food to the scaffold, snatch a victim from poverty, for he alone has a right to take away life who can give or restore it. He who kills without saving, resembles the evil genius of Cain, who is the father of all homicides. If man wishes to be a judge like unto God, let him therefore be a Saviour like him.”

“Lord,” replied the juryman, “I have often given alms, and have never refused bread to him who asked it of me.”

“Therein you have done well,” said the Christ ; “but that is not enough ; you are rich, and in that quality you should be the father of the poor ; you are a judge, and in that terrible function you have perhaps made orphans. Now, a father owes himself to his family, and he who has made orphans ought to adopt them.”

“How shall I know them? and how can I take care of them? My whole property perhaps would not be enough.”

“The unhappy and the orphans are brothers,” said the Saviour, “and whatever you shall do for the first you meet will be counted to you as an acquittance towards the others. Do what you can, and you will have accomplished all justice. Let the tears of gratitude purify your hands, perhaps dyed with the blood of the innocent, and the martyrs themselves will pray and will suffer for you, and you shall be saved by the virtue of the blood that is shed, as those of my executioners who believed and loved, were saved by my cross.”

ELEVENTH LEGEND.

THE REPROBATES AND THE ELECT.

AFTER having said these things, the Christ was moved by the sufferings of those who die unjustly condemned, and he felt that from his whole heart, full of mercy and forgiveness, overflowed an immense love and an infinite blessing for those poor souls who depart alone and desolate, after having been cursed and rejected by the society of men.

Then he remembered the crowd which had cried out against him with one voice: “Crucify him!” and the pharisees who had laughed and wagged their heads while they insulted his agony, and the despairing groan which had at that moment escaped from his heart: “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” Then he transported himself in spirit to the confines of the visible world, to that wide extended desert hardly lighted by a doubtful twilight, where in a terrible silence wander those souls which seek their way.

There, in the midst of a plain, the mute and shifting soil of which seems formed of the ashes of the dead, he found two gates formerly built by the power of the first pontiffs: between the two gates sat a motionless old man, who seemed no longer to see or to

hear anything. It was the image of him to whom it was formerly said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church."

But the rock, formerly living, had become inert and cold, like the statues which pray upon tombs.

Before the two gates pressed a crowd of undecided and terrified souls; for the figure of stone held two keys in its hand; but it could no longer move its hand, and none could take the keys from it in order to open the gates.

When the Christ appeared in the midst of the souls, radiant and with his cross in his hand, they all prostrated themselves, pressing around him like an immense flock.

The Christ approached the image of stone, and easily took from it the key of heaven; nevertheless, he could not use it to open the gate, for, by covering it with gold and silver, it had been falsified.

As to the key of hell, not being able to take it from the hand of the statue, Jesus broke it; then he touched the two gates by turns with his cross, and they opened of themselves.

Then he seated himself near the gate of hell, because that alone is dangerous to men, and the gate of heaven needs not to be guarded.

In fact, the arms of God are always open to his creatures; the laws which he has given to them are laws of love, which should draw them to him, and not drive them away. If he threatens, it is a paternal warning, and he wishes to turn them from evil, because he is anxious for their happiness.

Jesus therefore stretched out his cross to close the passage to those despairing souls who sought the road to hell. Those who believed themselves most culpable, presented themselves the first; they were those unfortunates who had suffered so much in life as to kill themselves.

A woman was on her knees before the Saviour, and she said: "I endured life long and sorrowfully while my children had need of me, but I afterwards had need of their assistance, and the labor of my poor daughter was not enough for her support and mine: I had a son who had devoted himself to the service of the altar, but at the moment of receiving the last orders, he confessed that he loved, and thy ministers rejected him! Obligated then to live

by the work of his hands, when he had never learnt to work, his own misfortunes were enough for him ; and I voluntarily killed myself, in order to relieve my children from the burden of my old age."

The Christ did not at first answer this woman ; he wept.

Then he said to her with gentleness : " You are not the author of your death ; those who destroyed the future of your son, shall answer for it in your stead. Enter into the peace of your God, for your devotedness has expiated your sin."

And he showed to the poor woman the gate of heaven ; but she was not willing to enter, " for," said she, " I await my son, who still suffers upon the earth, and who will perhaps die sadly like myself, cursed by a Church which he did not wish to deceive, and abandoned by a religion which he loved more than his life and than mine."

A man afterwards presented himself and said to the Lord : " I was not afraid of life ; I loved its combats and its trials ; but I saw that I could not live without degrading my mind and my heart. I was a writer without fortune, and I had not the sad courage to barter the sacred gift of eloquence ; but poverty would perhaps have weakened my courage, and by degrees have debased my soul, and I did not wait for it."

" Why did you despair ?" said the Christ. " Suffering never debases the strong."

" Lord, I was weak, inasmuch as I feared."

" Remain, therefore, at the gate of heaven until the time assigned for your trials shall be accomplished, for it is not just that the workman should rest before he has finished his work. Nevertheless, there is this of good in you, that you feared debasement more than death, and your sacrifice will live in the remembrance of God."

Others had killed themselves from despairing love, and the Christ did not permit them to rush into hell, where love can never enter ; but neither could they find rest in heaven except with those whom they loved, and they must seek or wait for them.

And the Christ said : " It is not the poor, despairing soul that should be condemned, but those who allow the poor soul to des-

pair. It is not the loving and desolate hearts that must be accused, but those who separate what God intended to join together.

“Therefore my Father will be less rigorous towards all these poor souls, than towards those of the scribes, the pharisees, the doctors of the law, and the moralists without heart. For the disowned of the world are the elect of heaven, and the elect of the world will be disowned in the kingdom of my Father.”

After those who had committed suicide, came those women who were doubly dead, for they had lost their modesty before losing their life.

One of them, hiding her face, said to the Lord: “I was only a child when my mother sold me. I grew up in shame and in sorrow, weeping over my purity as a fallen angel must weep over heaven; but I never abandoned my mother, though she no longer deserved that sacred name. I never cursed her, and I died of the privations which I imposed on myself for her sake.”

“Rise, my daughter,” said the Christ to her, “go and take your seat among the virgins and the martyrs.”

Now there were at the entrance of the gate of heaven some austere souls, whose life had been passed in the practice of a scrupulous devotion, and those souls murmured at the clemency of the Saviour, and no longer wished to enter heaven when they saw that sinning souls were admitted there.

Jesus said to them: “It is not I who condemn you, but your pride has judged you. Since you no longer wish for heaven, where my clemency admits your brothers, the gate of hell is open, and I will not close it against you.”

Thus among those who judged themselves worthy of hell, Jesus found many elect for heaven; and not one of those who thought themselves worthy of heaven was found pure enough to be admitted there.

They were therefore sent into the lower circle of trials, into that furnace of life militant where fire purifies souls.

Now, the fire which burns souls to save them is God’s eternal love, which is the peace of holy souls and the punishment of the wicked.

TWELFTH LEGEND.

THE SERMON ON THE PLAIN.

AT that time the workmen went out from the great city and assembled in a neighboring plain, and they said: "We work hard during the long hours of day, and we can hardly get a piece of bread to carry home to our children at night: our wives are compelled to work like ourselves, and life fails them at the same time with courage and hope. We build the houses of the rich, and we know not where to lay our head; we weave the stuff of their splendid garments, and we are naked; we sow and we reap for them, and we have no wherewithal to prevent us from dying of hunger. Let us die therefore if necessary, but let us work no longer for false brothers. 'The time will come when our strength will fail us, when early old age, or the disgraceful diseases which attack poverty will paralyse us, and then no one will come to our assistance, and we shall be compelled to die still more miserably, and after having suffered still longer.'"

To this others answered: "Doubtless we have the right to stop working, and to die; but can we kill our wives and our children? Can we condemn them to the horrible suffering of hunger, while we have arms and a heart?"

"What shall we do then?" cried all the voices together, while fists clenched in suffering and in anger were raised in threatening gestures above the heads of the whole crowd.

"Death to those who prevent us from living!" cried a voice, which was followed by a long and terrible murmur.

"Let us march!" cried the most excited.

"Stop!" said others, "where are we going?"

"We are going to fight against the rich."

"But the rich will defend themselves, and will crush us. They have public order and its guarantees on their side; they have the law with them, and we have not even a chief to lead us."

Nevertheless, in the midst of the crowd, a circle was formed around a young man, and several workmen, who recognised him, cried out: "Make room for the apprentice carpenter! Silence! listen to him! he will tell us what we must do!"

Then came the four journeymen whom the Christ had met upon the road, and they said to the workmen : “ Brothers, do not deceive yourselves, for this man is not what he appears to be. If he speaks, listen to him as you would listen to God himself, and do all that he shall tell you ; for under the humble appearance of a workman like ourselves, it is the Christ who has come again among men.”

These words excited murmurs in the assembly.

The greater number contradicted, others drew near from curiosity, and others still, cried out to Jesus ; “ If thou be the Christ, prove it by miracles, and we will fall on our knees and worship thee.”

Jesus answered : “ So long as the people groan in servitude, they should pray upon their knees, for their very attitude is then a prayer : they ask God to raise them.

“ For this reason, before praying, interrogate your soul. If your soul is debased by servitude, if it bows before the terrors of death, if it still bends under the power of men like a broken reed, fall upon your knees and pray that God may stretch out his hand to you.

“ But if your soul is free, if it is ready to march in order to return to its native land, if your will is upright, if nothing chains your motions, remain standing while you pray to God, for then your head and your heart will be nearer to heaven.

“ Thus, therefore, standing, or on your knees, around me who remain erect and who pray, let us all worship God together, for to you I must be only the first worshipper of God.

“ Now, brothers, remember what I told you so many centuries ago, and what you have not yet understood : ‘ Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be given unto you in addition.’ Why then should you be troubled about what you shall eat and what you shall drink ? Is the kingdom of God only in food and in drink ? Out of the kingdom of God it is impossible that all shall be fed and lodged and clothed.

“ Why should you expect the fruits of the promised land out of the promised land ? do you believe that the desert can furnish to you the beautiful harvests of the fields of Israel ?”

The workmen listened attentively, but they did not yet under-

stand, and one of them, raising his voice, said, "Master, you do, in fact, speak in parables and images like the Christ; are we then not yet in a condition to understand, and could you not express your thought more clearly? What is that kingdom of God, of which you speak? Is it merely the paradise which the priests would have us expect after death? Is it there only that we can hope to be lodged and fed and clothed? Do you intend to advise us to go to mass and to vespers, in order to better the condition of our wives and children?"

Jesus answered: "Did you not learn in your childhood to ask God that his kingdom might come, and did you not say to him every morning and evening: 'Thy will be done *on earth* as it is done in heaven?'

"The kingdom of God is the reign of the will of God. Now, what God wills, is harmony and justice.

"The kingdom of God is the reign of liberty, because the true children of God can will only good, and must do what they will. But in order to will good, it is necessary to know what good is. Liberty cannot reign without intelligence.

"The kingdom of God is the reign of equality, because the stronger owe to the weaker the protection of their strength, and the wiser, instead of exploiting the inexperience of the less intelligent, ought to guide them with goodness and without humiliating them. In order to do all this, it is necessary to love each other a great deal. The reign of equality cannot therefore be established without the most perfect charity. And the fulfilling of the kingdom of God will be the reign of fraternity; when men will no longer say: 'Each for himself;' but, 'each for all and all for each.'

"Now, for what purpose have you come into the plain? Have you come to hear the word? But the time has come when truth needs no longer to cry upon the mountain, nor to assemble its hearers in the plain; the word now resembles the flowers of spring, and the leaves of autumn which the wind scatters everywhere. You have come together without knowing what you ought to do; this is why brute force, which knows what it desires, will disperse you.

"You say that you are strong enough to attack the rich and

to overcome them ! But when you shall have opposed violence to violence, and disorder to disorder, will peace and harmony be the result ? Do you simply wish to rob the robbers and to assassinate the assassins, in order to put yourselves in their places, so that others may afterwards rob and assassinate you ?

“ Because your house is inconvenient, will you burn or destroy it before having built a new one, and before even knowing upon what plan you will build it ?

“ You ask what is the kingdom of God : it is the kingdom of peace and harmony.

“ Look at the sky and see the spheres move without confusion around their centres ! Look at the earth and consider the regular movement of the seasons, and the harmonious progress of vegetation and life !

“ Do you know what attractions and what forces make so many stars gravitate around one and the same sun ? have you taken the compass of God to measure the distances and balance the various attractions ? Do you know exactly by what degrees of heat and cold the germs are preserved, developed and fertilized ? You say to God : ‘ Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven,’ and you do not think that the social universe has its attractions and its laws of equilibrium as well as the celestial universe. Now, do you know those laws ?

“ Be not terrified, nevertheless, and be not discouraged, for God knows that of which you are ignorant. He has himself meditated the plan of the grand human harmony, and in order to assign to each of you his place, he has magnetized you as he has the stars. Know then, before all, that your rule is not your individual caprice, badly regulated by a falsified understanding, and that your law should not be the erroneous opinion of the world !

“ I said ‘ woe to the world,’ and I shall still repeat it, so long as it has eyes with which it does not see, and ears with which it does not hear.

“ Until this day, charity has been a sacrifice, and devotedness a martyrdom. But why should charity, which ought to be the life of all, triumph only in the death of the elect ?

“ Well ! I tell you now that charity is not only the life of

heaven, but also that of the earth, and that the devotedness of heroes must become the happiness of the weakest children.

“Have I not told you that goodness and gentleness must one day possess the earth ?

“Have I not told you that if two or three were met together in my name, I would be in the midst of them ? and if I said two or three, what shall I say of two or three hundred thousand ?

“Have I not told you : ‘Happy are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God ?’

“If two or three hundred thousand of you have met in the plain, and each one has his individual thought, you are only a dangerous assemblage, useless for your salvation. But let a thousand men dispersed in their houses and in their workshops be united in the same thought, and direct their efforts towards one and the same object : there will be a real power capable of leading a great people.

“Do you wish to be free ? Be strong.

“Do you wish to be strong ? Be united.

“Do you wish to be united ? Be intelligent and good.

“Do you wish to be intelligent and good ? Be just.

“Before asking justice then of those who oppress you, cause justice to reign in your midst.

“Be not a crowd, be a people ; be not a mass, be a body. And in order that this body may live, let charity be its soul !

“You wish to destroy evil ! then first do all the good you can ; for good is the antidote of evil, and you can destroy evil only by opposing good to it.

“Do you know how twelve workmen conquered the world ? They first sought the kingdom of God and his justice, they united themselves inseparably in the same spirit and the same love, then they dispersed and they were always together.

“I said to you : ‘Happy are the poor in spirit,’ because the kingdom of intelligence had not yet come, and it was necessary to save the world by faith ; and now I say to you : ‘Happy are those who are rich in intelligence,’ because they dispose of the powers of the spirit of truth !

“You know that I had still many things to say to you, but you could not bear them then : now comes the spirit of intelligence

which will make you understand what I said to you and divine what I did not say to you. But know that the spirit of intelligence is a spirit of gentleness, and this is why religious symbols represent it under the form of a dove.

“Violence consumes and destroys itself, and all the tyrannies of the world can do nothing against a will which is founded on justice.

“Therefore, before destroying the city of men, labor to build the city of God. The city of God must first be realized in a people, for the people is to the city what the soul is to the body, what the body is to the garment.

“Have, therefore, all of you, one same spirit and one same will ; cause the spirit of gentleness and of peace to reign in your houses ; seek not the forgetfulness of your miseries in an intemperance which increases your misery and destroys your health ; neglect no means of instructing yourselves ; let everything that is yours be also your brethren’s, and let your brethren’s sufferings be also yours, and you will be the people of God.

“Then, I tell you in truth that your masters of to-day will be your servants, and you will begin to reign over the world.”

As Jesus finished speaking, an officer of the police and some soldiers appeared, summoning the workmen to disperse.

Then all looked at Jesus, who, stretching forth his hands, said to them : “Obey as I obeyed. I brought into the world a new law, and I destroyed the old law only by submitting myself to it, even unto death.

“Disperse, and carry with you the remembrance of my word: it is that will reunite you.”

Immediately the workmen dispersed, and the officer of police, wishing to give proof of his zeal, approached Jesus and ordered the soldiers to arrest him as one who had spoken at a seditious meeting.

But Jesus suddenly disappeared, so that those men looked for him on one side and on the other, and mutually blamed each other for having let him escape.

Now, Jesus left them in this manner, not because he had to fear a new passion in that spiritual and symbolic state in which he can no longer suffer, except in the person of his brothers, but in order to spare a new crime to unintelligent judges.

THIRTEENTH LEGEND.

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

AT that time, the Christ passed by the field of tombs, and he there saw a young man who was on his knees and was weeping before a cross.

On seeing this young man, Jesus had pity on his sorrow, and drawing near, said to him : “ Why do you weep ? ”

He who was weeping turned round, and stretching out his hand answered : “ My mother has been here for three days.”

Jesus said to him : “ Believe me, my son, your mother is not here ; only the last vestment which she put off has been deposited here ; why do you weep over those insensible remains ? Rise up and walk ; your mother waits for you.”

The young man shook his head sadly and said : “ I will not rise, and I will not walk to go and seek death ; I shall await it and it will come ; and then, I know, I shall be again united to my mother.”

Then the Christ : “ Death awaits death, and life seeks life ! Do not sadden the soul which has preceded you by a selfish and sterile sorrow ; do not retard her progress towards God by your despair and inertness. For her love still lives in your heart, and you will not have lost her if you make her live worthily in you. Instead of weeping for your mother, resuscitate her ! Do not look at me with astonishment, and do not think I make a jest of your sorrow ! She whom you regret is near you ; one of the veils which separated your souls has fallen ; one still remains. And separated only by that veil, you ought to live for each other ; you will work for her and she will work for you.”

“ How shall I work for her ? ” replied the orphan ; “ she no longer needs anything now that she is in the ground.”

“ You deceive yourself, my son, and you still confound the body with the clothing. In the world of spirits, she has more than ever need of intelligence and love. Now, you are the life of her heart, and the engrossing thought of her mind, and she calls you to her assistance : in order that you may go through life doing good, and in order that you may reach her with full hands when God shall re-unite you.

“ In order to have the right to rest, man must work. Now, if you do not work for your mother, you shackle her soul. This is why I said to you : Rise up and walk, because the soul of your mother will rise and will walk with you, and you will resuscitate her in yourself if you make her thought and her love fruitful.

“ She has a body upon earth, it is yours ; you have a soul in heaven, it is hers. Let that soul and that body walk together, and your mother will live again. Believe me, my son, thought and love never die, and those whom you believe to be dead are more alive than you, if they think and love more.

“ If the thought of death saddens and terrifies you, take refuge in the bosom of life ; there you will find all those whom you love. The dead are those who do not think and who do not love ; for they work for corruption and corruption consumes them in its turn. Let the dead then weep for the dead, and live with the living !

“ Love is the bond of souls ; and when it is pure, that bond is indestructible. Your mother precedes you, she goes towards God ; but she is still chained to you ; and if you slumber in torpor and in selfish sorrow, she will be compelled to wait for you, and she will suffer.

“ But I tell you in truth that all the good which you shall do will be reckoned to her soul, and that if you do evil, she will voluntarily undergo its penalty. This is why I say to you : If you love her, live for her.”

Then the young man rose, and his tears ceased to flow, and he looked upon the face of the Saviour with astonishment, for the countenance of the Christ was radiant with intelligence and love, and immortality shone in his eyes.

Then he took the young man by the hand and said to him : “ Come.”

Then he led him upon a hill which overlooked the whole city, and he said to him : “ There is the real field of tombs !

“ Below there, in those palaces which sadden the horizon, there are dead persons who should be wept for much more than those whose remains are here, for those persons do not rest. They move about in corruption and dispute with the worms for their food ; they are like a man who has been buried alive. Their chest wants the air of heaven, and the earth weighs heavy upon

them. They are nailed in the narrow and miserable institutions which they have made, as in the boards of a coffin.

“Young man, who wept, and whose tears my words have dried, weep now and groan over the dead who still suffer ! weep over those who believe themselves alive and who are tormented corpses ! It is to those that a powerful voice should cry : come out from your tombs ! Oh ! when will the trumpet of the angel sound ?

“The angel that must awaken the world, is the angel of intelligence ; the angel that must save the world, is the angel of love.

“The light will be as the lightning which rises at the east and which is seen at the west at the same moment ; at its voice the body of the Christ, which is the fraternal bread, will be revealed to all, and around the body which must feed them, the eagles will gather together.

“Then the human word, freed from selfish interests, will be united to the divine word. And the unitary voice, resounding through the entire world, will be the trumpet of the angel.

“Then the living will rise, the living who have been thought dead, and who still suffer while awaiting their deliverance. Then all who are not dead will march forward and will go to the presence of the Lord ; while the ashes of those who no longer exist will be swept away by the wind.

“Young man, hold yourself ready, and take care not to die ! Live for those whom you love, and love those who live, and do not weep for those who have ascended a step higher than yourself upon the ladder of life ; weep for those who are dead !

“Your mother loved you, consequently loves you still more now that her thought and her love are freed from the weight of earth. Weep for those who do not think of you, and who do not love you.

“For I tell you in truth, that humanity has but one body and one soul, and that it lives everywhere that it feels itself work and suffer.

“Now, a member which is no longer sensible to the wellbeing, or the suffering of the other members, is dead and must soon be cut off.”

Having said these things, the Christ disappeared from the eyes

of the young man, who, after having remained for some moments motionless, and as if struck by the remembrance of a dream, silently resumed the road to the city, saying to himself: "I will seek the living among the dead. I will do good to all those who suffer, by suffering with them and loving them, in order that the soul of my mother may know it and may bless me in heaven.

"For I understand now that heaven is not far from us, and that the soul is to the body what the natural sky is to the earth. The sky which surrounds and supports the earth is filled with immensity, as the soul is intoxicated with God himself.

"And those who live in the same thought and in the same love can never be separated."

FOURTEENTH LEGEND.

THE DISCOURAGED PHILOSOPHER.

AT that time there was a man who had studied all the sciences, and had meditated upon all systems, and who had come to doubt all things.

Being itself appeared to him a dream, because he found no sufficient cause. He had sought for the nature of God and had not divined it, for he had never loved. And his intellect had become darkened, like the eye of him who looks fixedly at the sun. This is why he was sad and discouraged.

Jesus, who thinks of the dead and who loves to cure the blind, had pity upon that poor diseased intellect and that extinguished heart; and he entered one evening into the solitary chamber of the philosopher.

He was a pale man, bald, with hollow eyes, with furrowed brow and disdainful lips.

He was watching alone, seated by a little table covered with papers and with books; but he no longer read and no longer wrote.

Doubt bowed his head as if under a hand of lead, his fixed eyes

did not see, and his mouth smiled vaguely with a profound bitterness.

His lamp was consuming by his side, and his hours passed in silence without hope and without remembrance.

Jesus remained near him without saying anything, and lifting his eyes to heaven he prayed.

The philosopher slowly raised his head, then he shook it and let it fall again, murmuring in a low voice : " Visionary."

" Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name !" said Jesus.

" He let you die upon the cross," returned the thinker, " and you cried to him in vain : ' My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ' "

" May thy kingdom come !" continued the Saviour.

" We have been waiting for it these eighteen hundred and forty years," said the philosopher, " and it is further off now than ever."

" What do you know about it ?" then said the Master, looking upon him with a gentle and serious eye.

" I do not know even what is the kingdom of God which is to come," replied the philosopher. " If there be a God, he reigns now or he will never reign. Now, as I do not see the kingdom of God, I do not expect it ; and I do not even seek any longer to know if there be a God."

" Do you also doubt the existence of good and evil ?" asked Jesus.

" The distinction between them is arbitrary, since it varies according to time and place."

" Put your finger into the flame of your lamp," said the Saviour. " Why do you draw it back so quickly ? do you not know that a thinker like yourself has said that pain is not an evil ?"

" The reason is because I do not agree with him, but I do not know if I am more right than he."

" Why do you not agree with him ?"

" Because I feel the pain and it is invincibly repugnant to me."

" The distinction between good and evil is not arbitrary therefore so far as relates to your repugnances and attractions," then said Jesus. " And in fact evil could not be absolute. Evil exists

only for you and for all beings which are still imperfect. It is for such therefore that the kingdom of God must come, because they themselves will come into the kingdom of God. I have convinced you of a physical repugnance, and I will convince you as easily of a moral repugnance. The fire warns you by pain that it would destroy the life of your body, and conscience warns you by its cries and its remorse, that crime would destroy the life of your soul. Evil for you, is destruction ; good is life, and life is God ! The earth buried in darkness now awaits the coming of the sun, and yet the sun remains radiant in the centre of the universe, and it is the earth which gravitates around it. God reigns, but you have not yet entered into his kingdom ; for the kingdom of my father is the kingdom of science and of love, of wisdom and of peace. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of light, and that light strikes your eyes which do not see it, because they seek their brightness in themselves and find only darkness."

"Lord, open thou my eyes," said the philosopher, "and illumine my darkness."

Jesus said to him : "If I had closed your eyes, I ought to open them for you ; but if I open them and you please to close them again, how shall you see the light ? Do you not know that the will of a man acts upon the lids of his eyes, and that if he is forced to keep his eyes open or shut, he loses his sight ?

"I may induce you to kindle in yourself the fire which enlightens, and this is why I make you hear my words ; and since you already desire that I should open your eyes, you are not far from seeing."

"What is the fire which enlightens ?" asked the philosopher.

"You will know," said the Christ, "when you shall have loved a great deal. For if reason is like a lamp, love is its flame. If reason is as the eye of our soul, love is its strength and its life. A great reason without love is a beautiful eye that is dead ; it is a lamp richly carved, but cold and extinct.

"When the selfishness of the animal passions had caused human philosophy to fail, I saved the world by faith, because faith is the philosophy of love. You believe those whom you love, and those by whom you know yourself to be loved : thus I gave an immense charity as a basis to faith, when I and my apostles had proved

to men, by a bloody martyrdom, the sincerity of our love. And so long as the Church reigned by charity, she triumphed by faith ; but faith awaits intelligence, and the moment is near when those who shall have believed without seeing, will understand and see.

“ If therefore you wish to understand, begin by loving, in order to believe.”

“ What then shall I believe, Lord ? ”

“ Everything of which you are ignorant ; for faith is the trust of reasonable ignorance. Believe everything that God knows, and your faith will embrace immensity. Trust to your celestial Father everything of which he reserves to himself the knowledge, and do not be anxious at first about the infinite destinies. Love that immense wisdom whose child you are ; love other men who pass over the earth ignorant like yourself, and for the present still limit your science to the accomplishment of your duties ; you will soon see it grow of its own accord, and ascend towards God, for God allows himself to be seen by pure hearts.”

“ Oh ! to see God ! ” cried the philosopher, opening his trembling lips, like a man who is thirsty and who expects the rain from heaven. “ Oh ! to reunite at last in my thought all the scattered rays of that truth which I have so much loved, and which always escaped me ! But who will give me that immense love which makes man commune with God, and will bring him near to the centre of all light ? ”

“ You will deserve it by your works,” said the Christ, “ for if man is corrupted in the works of corruption, if he is destroyed in the works of hatred, he grows and is saved by works of love. In order to draw near to God, he must advance, and holy actions are the movements of our soul.”

“ What are really holy actions ? ” asked the doctor ; “ are they prayer and fasting ? ”

“ Listen,” said the Christ, “ and do not rashly judge your brothers who have passed before you, seeking and weeping. Humanity is confirmed in its desire by prayer and tears. And those of its children who first thirsted for the things of heaven, abstained from those of the earth ; but all this was only the beginning. It was necessary to know how to abstain, in order to learn how to use. It was first necessary to sacrifice the body to

the mind, in order to emancipate the mind. For the moral heaven is the liberty of the soul ; but the soul is called upon to govern the body, and not to destroy it ; as the material sky governs the earth and does not destroy it. 'The age of prayer and tears, must give place to the age of labor and hope ; for the prayer of the ancients was a labor, and it is necessary that our labor should be a more efficacious and more active prayer.'

"How shall I labor?" said the philosopher; "I can do nothing useful."

"Then you have lost the vigor of your mind in vain efforts," replied the Christ: "you have not even learnt how to live, you who wished to know everything. Become again a little child, and go to the school of love. Learn to love and to do good, that is the science of life."

"Remember the legend of Christophorus. He was a terrible giant, but as he did not know how to use his strength, he was as weak as a child. He therefore required a guardian, and he placed himself in the service of a king ; but the king was ill, and Christophorus left him. He sought for him who could make kings suffer ; and as he knew not God, he first attached himself to the genius of evil. But one day a cross appeared upon a rock, and the genius of evil fell as if struck by lightning. Then Christophorus sought for him of whom the cross is the sign, and an old man told him that he would find him by doing good. Christophorus knew not how to pray or to work, but he was strong and very tall, and he carried on his shoulders the wandering travelers who wished to cross the torrent. Now, one evening he carried a little child, under whom he bent as if he were carrying the world, for in the person of the poor wandering orphan he recognised the great God whom he sought."

"Do you understand this parable?"

"Yes, Lord," said the philosopher, who was now a Christian.

"Well! go and do as did Christophorus; carry the Christ when he faints with fatigue, or when the torrents of the world obstruct his passage. Suffering humanity shall be the Christ for you. Be the eye of the poor man, the arm of the weak, and the staff of the old man ; and God will tell you the great wherefore of the human race."

“I will do it, Lord ; and I feel that henceforth I shall not be alone in the world. To which of my brothers shall I first extend my hand ? ”

“To him who is more unhappy than you, and who, unknown to you, is expiring in the little chamber next to yours. Go then to his assistance, speak to him in order that he may hope, love him, that he may believe, make yourself loved by him that he may live.”

“Lead me to him, Lord, and speak to him for me.”

“Come and see,” said the Saviour, and he lightly touched the wall, which opened in the midst like a double curtain, and the philosopher was transported in the spirit to the chamber next his own. It was that of a young poet who was about dying deserted.

FIFTEENTH LEGEND.

THE DYING POET.

At that time there was a young man who, early in life, had heard in his soul the echo of the universal harmonies. Now, that internal music had distracted his attention from all things of mortal life, because he lived in a society which was still without harmony.

While a child, he was the butt of other children, who took him for an idiot ; when a young man, he hardly found a hand to clasp his hand, a heart on which to rest his heart.

His days passed in a long silence and in a profound revery ; he looked with strange ecstasy upon the sky, the water, the trees, the verdant fields ; then his eyes became fixed, internal glories were displayed in his mind, and surpassed the glories of nature. Then tears flowed unwittingly down his cheeks, pale with emotion, and, if any one spoke to him, he did not hear. Therefore he was seldom spoken to, and was quite generally looked upon as crazy.

He thus lived alone with God and with nature, speaking to

God in the language of harmony, and letting fall upon the earth songs to which no one listened.

But the material necessities of life at last seized him in their inextricable net ; he awoke upon the earth, still dazzled by his visions of heaven ; and when he wished to walk, he stumbled against men and against things, until he fell panting and despairing.

It was then that he shut himself up in his poor abode, and there awaited death.

It was then that the Christ looked upon him and had compassion on him.

The poet's chamber was gloomy, bare and cold ; he was only half covered by a few wornout garments ; stretched upon a sad bed of straw, he was restless with fever, and his eyes glistened with a dark fire.

The Christ appeared to him clothed in a white robe, an emblem of madness which he had received from Herod, and his brow was crowned at the same time with the bloody thorns, and with an aureole of glory.

“ Brother,” said he to the poor sick man, looking upon him with an ineffable love, “ why do you wish to die ? ”

“ Because one can no longer live upon the earth after having seen heaven,” sighed the poet.

“ And I, in order to live and suffer upon the earth, have nevertheless descended from heaven,” returned Jesus.

“ You are the Son of God and you are strong.”

“ And I wished to be the son of man, in order to hunger, to fear and to weep. Did I not faint in the garden of Olives ? Did I not groan upon the cross as if God had forsaken me ? ”

“ Well ! I,” said the sick man, “ I go forth from life as you went forth from the garden of Olives, and I am upon my bed of pain as you were upon the cross.”

“ If I had done nothing but pray to my father in the valleys while I breathed the perfume of the roses of Sharon, if I had silently intoxicated myself with the ecstasies of Mount Tabor, I should not have deserved to ransom the world upon the cross,” replied the Saviour. “ But I sought for the sheep that had strayed, and in order to stop my feet which ran without ceasing after the miseries of the people, it was necessary that they should be

nailed by the executioners. It was necessary to pierce my hands in order to prevent them from breaking bread for the famished multitudes ; and then, when I had nothing more to give to my brothers, I allowed all my blood to flow."

"I have sung," said the poet, "and men have not listened to me."

"That is because you sang for yourself alone, and because you too much disdained their disdain. You should, after the example of the eternal word, have descended sufficiently to make yourself understood."

"Perhaps, instead of forgetting me, they would then have crucified me."

"And then only, O my brother, would it have been beautiful to die in order to rise again glorious !"

"Master, instead of consoling me in my last hour, do you come to terrify and to reproach me ?"

"I come to cure you and to inspire you with courage to live, in order to enable you to deserve a quiet death and one full of immortality.

"Why do you wish to live only in heaven during the days which God gives you to pass upon the earth ? Why do you permit the immense love of your heart to be lost in vague aspirations ? Why do you isolate yourself in the pride of your dreams, while real sorrows bleed and palpitate about you ?

"God did not give you the celestial balm for the purpose of perfuming your head ; he did not intrust to you the wine of his chalice in order that you might intoxicate your mouth and disgust it with the bitter things of earth. You ought to soothe, to elevate, to console : you ought to be the physician of souls, and now you yourself, because you have concealed the remedies of God, are more ill than the others.

"Men have not understood you, you say ; but it is you, poor young man, who have not understood your brothers.

"What ! your intellect was superior, and you did not know how to speak to the poor in spirit ! You thought yourself great, and you were afraid to lower yourself in order to bring your mouth near to the ear of those who were small ! You loved, and you were disgusted by the infirmities of men !

“Rise up, poor fallen angel, and again begin your mission ! Know that the spirit of harmony is the spirit of love which I announced to the world under the name of the consoler. If it is the Holy Ghost which animates you, be henceforth the consoler of your brothers, and in order to have the right and the power to console them, learn to suffer and to work with them.

“I was greater than you, and more than you I raised my soul to the bosom of the eternal harmonies ; and yet I passed my life working with the carpenters and conversing with the poor, enlightening their minds, moving their hearts and curing their diseases. Until now you have made poetry only in dreams and in words, but the time has come to make poetry in actions ! For everything that is done from love of humanity, everything that is devotedness, sacrifice, patience, courage and perseverance, everything of this nature is sublime with harmony, is the poetry of martyrs.

“Instead of vaguely loving the infinite, try to love infinitely your brothers who are near to you. Here is one whom I bring to you ; he suffered like you, and he had arrived at extinction of thought because he had isolated the labor of his mind, as you had arrived at despair of heart, because you had isolated your love. Henceforth you will both know that it is not good for man to be alone.”

The philosopher who had become a Christian then approached the bed of the sick man, whose fever had been suddenly calmed by the gentle and severe words of Jesus, and said to him : “Brother, accept my cares and half of the bread which remains to me : to-morrow we will work together, and when I shall be ill in my turn, you will take care of me and you will have bread for me.

“Brother, because you have seen heaven, do not break the ladder which will enable you to ascend thither, but rather take me by the hand and lead me, for I have thought much and meditated much, and I now feel that I have not loved enough.

“You, whose voice is the living echo of eternal harmony, you are a child of celestial love, for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. But love could not become selfish without

killing itself, and it can find fulness of life only by giving itself wholly to others.

“Live therefore in order that I may love you, for if I love I shall be happy ; and if you love God, you desire the happiness of those who are the children of God like yourself. Harmony is at once science and poetry, mathematical exactness is the great law of beauty, and the harmonic glories are the divine reason of numbers ; but all this, to be living and real, must be applied to what is.

“Brother, the positive of God is a thousand fold more poetical than the ideal of man. Let us seek God in humanity, and let us not despair of its destinies ; for its very disorders lead it to harmony, and if God has counted us in the number of those who first see whither this wandering people must go through the desert, let us place ourselves at the head of this great and laborious movement, instead of isolating ourselves and dying.”

“Brother, thanks to you,” said the poet, “and thanks to heaven which inspires you ! henceforth I will no longer withdraw from the field of battle in order to die alone, while I can still fight ; I should esteem myself a coward and a deserter. If I fall with arms in hand in the first or second rank of the humanitarian militia, I shall die full of courage and blessing God, and my soul will not present itself alone before the supreme judge.”

From that day, the philosopher and the poet were united in a holy friendship, and sometimes they did not disdain the most humble labors to support their life.

Thus they went through all classes of society and everywhere found diseased hearts which awaited the balm of a word of wisdom and of love. Everywhere they felt that they could still do good, and the sufferings of life seemed light to them ; for they bore them with courage, in order to inspire with courage those who suffered like themselves, and devotedness gave them new strength.

SIXTEENTH LEGEND.

THE NEW NICODEMUS.

THERE was at that time a priest who loved the truth, and who sought for good in all the sincerity of his heart.

Now, one night when he was watching and praying, the Christ came and seated himself by his side and looked upon him with goodness.

“Master, is it you at last?” said the pastor. “I have sought you for a long time, and now you come to me during the night!”

Jesus answered him: “Nicodemus came to see me during the night, because he was afraid of the Jews: I know that your existence depends upon the new synagogue, and I do not wish to compromise you. For the scribes and the pharisees and the false doctors of the law still persecute me and persecute those who receive me.

“Lord,” said the priest with sadness, “the glorious years of which the beautiful ages of the church are composed have then been fruitless for the future! Does truth then always escape from the ardent aspirations of men? the saints and the martyrs were then deceived, since eighteen centuries of combats and of study have only made enemies to you of those who ought to be your ministers!”

Jesus said to him: “They are not all my enemies, and my father still reckons among them generous souls and pure hearts. I shall go to them as I have come to you, in order to recall to them the signs of the times and to open their eyes so that they may see.

“I still come in secret to explain to you what I taught in secret to that doctor of the ancient law, who was also a man of good will.

“I told him that the entrance to the kingdom of God was a new birth. The life of the world is an incessantly renewed generation, and it is necessary that the germs of the year which dies should be deposited in the earth in order to prepare the riches of the year which shall be born. But new wine must not be put into old bottles.

“My father’s vine is never sterile, and from year to year it renews its fruits; but he calls the vinedressers at different hours of the day. This is why I called the faithful doctors of the ancient law to a new birth, for their old mother, the Jewish synagogue, was dying, and in order to be born it was necessary to leave her bosom. And those who believed left the dead body of the synagogue while they remained united to its soul, and they were the first children of the universal Church.

“But the universal Church was a new heaven and a new earth; and in order to renew all things it was first necessary to fight against all the powers of heaven and of earth. This is why the first Christians built an ark to struggle against the unchaining of the winds and the rising of the waters. That ark was the hierarchical Church, the holy Catholic Church, the guardian of the symbol of unity.

“So long as the ark is borne by the waters, it moves under the breath of God, and in its bosom every living soul seeks a refuge: but, as soon as it stops, the new family must come out from it in order to re-people the earth, and this is the new birth of which I have spoken to you.”

The priest said to him: “Lord, must I leave the Catholic church? But to what other church could I unite myself?”

“I do not tell you to leave the Catholic Church,” returned Jesus, “but I invite you to enter into it. I tell you to free yourself from shadows in order to begin to live in the light. I tell you to leave the school in order to enter into society and to apply to it the science which you must have acquired!

“I did not come to destroy the ancient law, but to give to it its accomplishment, and I now come to accomplish the new law.

“Have I not said: Believe first and you will understand afterwards, and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free?

“Have I not said that my second coming would be as the light which strikes the eyes of all, and which shines at once upon the whole world?

“Have I not announced that the spirit of intelligence would come and that it would suggest to my disciples the complement of my words? And do not your symbols say that the spirit of

intelligence is the spirit of love which must produce a new creation and make young again the face of the earth? Now, is not the spirit of love that spirit of order and of harmony which must associate all men, and make them all commune in divine and human unity?

“Come out then from all the bonds which prevent brothers from advancing towards their brothers, overthrow the barriers which separate, enlarge the abodes which are isolated, escape from the doctrines which reprove some and elect others, leave the blinded synagogue, enter into the Catholic Church, which is now no longer a conventicle of priests and of doctors, but the universal association of all men of intelligence and love.”

“Lord,” said the priest, “I will do all that you say. Whither shall I first go and where shall I begin?”

“Remain where you are,” said Jesus, “and do what you have to do. Teach children, catechize the poor, visit the sick and pray for the people. Let nothing be changed in your works, but let a universal love vivify them and make them fruitful!

“Preach mercy and peace, preach modesty and the forgiveness of injuries, preach holy aspirations towards God and union among brothers! Let charity be the law of your soul, and you will not impose upon the souls of others constraints which drive them to despair! Be gentle and humble of heart as were my first disciples, when you speak to women, to children and to the poor people; but be inflexible as were my martyrs, when any one attempts to corrupt or to intimidate you.

“What I say to you, I say for all those who, like you, shall believe in the spirit of intelligence and love; and this is why I address my words to many.

“Do not confound the spirit of abstinence with the spirit of death; for I ordered my disciples to abstain for a while from the riches of their father, only that they might learn to use those riches worthily.

“I tell you in truth that I have not come to kill the flesh, but to save it by subjecting it to the spirit. For there should be no division between the spirit and the flesh of man: God has created and blessed them equally.

“The spirit is the king of the flesh : a king must not reign in order to destroy.

“The organs and the senses are the subjects of the intellect : a king should prevent his subjects from doing evil ; but he should also provide for their prosperity and happiness.

“Is not attraction then the general law of beings, and is not equilibrium the harmony of attractions ?

“Let not the spirit then break the flesh, and let not the flesh extinguish the spirit ! For either of these excesses would be death !

“Now, I have not come to kill those who lived, I have come to restore health to those who were sick and life to those who were dead !”

Having said all these things, Jesus disappeared from the eyes of the good priest, and left him full of hope and of courage ; for he saw the power of God supply from age to age the shortcomings of men, and he understood how religion advances always through the ages, growing and triumphing always.

SEVENTEENTH LEGEND.

THE TOMB OF SAINT JOHN.

At that time Jesus traversed with the rapidity of the spirit all the countries of the earth. All were sad and expectant. And everywhere the Christ was still alone, as in the garden of Olives.

He entered, as a poor pilgrim, into the basilica of Saint Peter, where no one recognised him : he approached the tomb of his apostles, in order to see if their relics were ready for resurrection ; but the ashes of the saints were cold, and they continued to sleep their sleep.

Now, there is one of those apostles who, according to the tradition, was never to die ; he whom the symbolic painting represents to us as always young, and who has an eagle for emblem :

it is the one who is called the apostle of charity and the disciple of love.

It is this one, say the legends of the earlier times, who is to awake at the end of the ages, in order to save the world, by rekindling the holy fire of fraternal charity ; and, in fact, say those same legends, his remains were never found : the faithful of Ephesus thought to bury him, and retain him among them, but the angels came and hid the sleeping apostle in the solitudes of Patmos.

Jesus therefore transported himself into the island of Patmos, which seemed still terrified by the noise of the seven thunders, and he approached the grotto where slept his faithful disciple. At the entrance of the tomb, a celestial form was seated motionless ; it was like a woman, clothed in a long azure mantle, which covered her head, and enveloped her entirely, falling around her in large folds.

Her pale and somewhat elongated hands were clasped with fervor ; and her eyes, full of a resigned sadness and an infinite hope, were fixed upon the tomb.

Jesus approached her, and said : “ My mother, is it you ? You doubtless knew that I would come here ? ”

“ I did know it, my son,” replied Mary ; “ for you tenderly loved him who rests here ; and when you were about to die, you confided me to him, saying unto him : ‘ Behold your mother ! ’ ”

“ Now, in order that I may be able to return upon the earth in the person of the women who shall understand what it is to be mothers, it is necessary that the disciple of love should revive in order to protect me. For in the person of all women of intelligence and love, I must bring you into the world a second time, O my son ! ”

“ Mother,” returned Jesus, “ do you remember what the angel said to the women who sought me in the sepulchre ? ‘ Why do you seek the living among the dead ? He has risen, he is no longer here. ’ ”

“ You know that the prophet Elias, according to the traditions of the Jews, was to return upon the earth, in order to prepare the way for me. The form of Elias was transfigured, and his spirit returned in the person of John the Baptist.

“Thus, I tell you in truth that you live now upon the earth in the person of all women who feel the hope of the future thrill in their bosom. This is why, my mother, you this day appear for the last time under your symbolic figure.

“John, my beloved disciple, bequeathed his spirit to all the men full of faith and love, who wish to build the new Jerusalem, the holy city of harmony, and I tell you in truth that those men know how to honor their mother, and that they are worthy to be called the sons of the woman.

“For they submit their heart to the inspirations of your heart, those who wish to divide labor among all the children of the great family according to the attractions and the fitnesses of each, in order that all together may produce the honey of the human hive, which shall afterwards serve for the nourishment of all.

“They know what woman is, those who wish to emancipate her love from all servitude, in order that it may never be prostituted, and that the source of the generations may be pure.

“Rise up therefore, and come with me, my mother ; come upon Calvary, to be present at my last symbolic triumph ; then we will live again in the whole of humanity. All the women will be you, and all the men will be me, and we two will make but one.”

And the Christ, raising his mother and carrying her in his arms, as she had so often carried him when he was a little child, left the island of Patmos, and, walking upon the waves of the sea, went towards the shores of Palestine.

At this moment the sun rose, and made the whole surface of the waters glisten, and the two celestial forms glided along without casting any shadow, and without leaving any trace, like a pair of fabulous birds, or like a light cloud, tinged with the colors of the dawn, and shaded with the reflections of the rainbow.

EIGHTEENTH LEGEND.

THE FAREWELL TO CALVARY.

JESUS crossed the desolate fields of Judea and stopped upon the arid summit of ancient Calvary.

There an angel with black brows and gloomy eye was seated, enveloped in his two vast wings. It was Satan, the king of the old world.

The rebellious angel was sad and fatigued, and he turned away his looks with disgust from an earth in which evil was without genius, and in which the ennui of a timid corruption had taken the place of the Titanian combats of the great ancient passions. He felt that in trying men he had taught the strong and deceived only the weak ; therefore he no longer deigned to tempt any one, and gloomy under his diadem of gold, he vaguely listened to the fall of souls into eternity, as to the monotonous drops of an eternal rain.

Impelled by a force which was unknown to him, he had come and seated himself upon Calvary, and thinking of the death of the Man-God, he was jealous of him.

He was a powerful and beautiful angel ; but he was jealous of the Christ, and that jealousy was symbolized by a serpent which buried its head in his bosom and gnawed his heart.

Jesus and Mary stood before him and looked upon him in silence with great pity. Satan in his turn looked upon the Redeemer and smiled with bitterness.

“Have you come,” said he to him, “to try and die a second time for a world which you could not save by your first execution ? Have you tried in vain to change stones into bread to feed your people, and do you come to confess to me your defeat ? Have you fallen from the pinnacle of the temple, and has your divinity been broken by its fall ?

“Do you come to adore me, in order that you may possess the world ? Go ! it is too late now, and I could not deceive you. The empire of the world has departed from those who adored me in your name ; and I myself am tired of reigning without glory. If you are discouraged like me, take your seat by my side, and let us think no longer of God or of man.”

“I do not come to take a seat by your side,” said the Christ, “I come to raise you, to forgive you and to console you, in order that you may cease to be wicked.”

“I want none of your forgiveness,” replied the bad angel, “and it is not I who am wicked.

“The wicked one is he who gives to spirits a thirst for intelligence, and who envelopes truth in an impenetrable mystery. It is he who allows to their love the glimpse of an ideal virgin, of a beauty so intoxicating as to cast them into delirium, and who gives her to them only to tear her at once from their first embraces, and to load her with eternal chains. It is he in fine who has given liberty to the angels, and who has prepared infinite punishments for those who did not wish to be his slaves.

“The wicked one is he who has killed his innocent son under the pretext of avenging upon him the crimes of the guilty, and who has not pardoned the guilty, but has made the death of his son an additional crime on their part.”

“Why recall to me so bitterly the ignorance and the errors of men?” returned Jesus. “I know better than you do how much they have disfigured the image of God, and you yourself know very well that God does not resemble the image they have made of him.

“God gave you a thirst for intelligence only to quench it for ever with the waters of eternal truth. But why close your eyes and seek for daylight in yourself instead of looking at the sun? If you sought the light where it is, you would find it, for in God there are neither shadows nor mysteries; the shadows are in yourself, and the mysteries are the weaknesses of your spirit.

“God did not give liberty to his creatures in order to take her from them again, but he gives her to them as a wife, and not as an illegitimate mistress; he desires that they should possess her and not commit violence on her, for that chaste daughter of heaven cannot survive an outrage, and when her virgin dignity is wounded, liberty is dead to him who has misunderstood her.

“God does not desire slaves: it is revolted pride which has created servitude. The law of God is the royal right of his creatures; it is the title of their everlasting liberty.

“God did not kill his son, but the son of God voluntarily gave

his life in order to kill death ; and this is why he now lives in the whole of humanity, and will save all the generations, for from trial to trial he leads the human family into the promised land, and they have already tasted its first fruits. I therefore come to announce to you, O Satan, that your last hour has arrived, unless you wish to be free and to reign with me over the world, by intelligence and love.

“But you shall no longer be called Satan, you shall resume the glorious name of Lucifer, and I will place a star on your brow and a torch in your hand. You shall be the genius of labor and of industry, because you have greatly striven, greatly suffered, and sadly thought !

“You shall stretch your wings from one pole to the other, and you shall hover over the world ; glory shall reawaken at your voice. Instead of being the pride of isolation, you shall be the sublime pride of devotedness, and I will give to you the sceptre of earth and the key of heaven.”

“I do not understand you,” said the demon, sadly shaking his head, “and I am not able to understand you. You know well that I can no longer love !” And with a sorrowful gesture the fallen angel showed to the Christ the wound that furrowed his chest and the serpent that gnawed his heart.

Jesus turned towards his mother, and looked upon her : Mary understood the eyes of her son ; she approached the unhappy angel, and did not disdain to stretch forth her hand to him, and to touch his wounded breast. Then the serpent fell of itself and expired at the feet of Mary, who crushed its head ; the wound of the angel’s heart was healed, and a tear, the first he had shed, slowly descended upon the repentant countenance of Lucifer. That tear was precious as the blood of a God ; and by it were ransomed all the blasphemies of hell.

The regenerated angel prostrated himself upon Calvary, and weeping, kissed the place where the cross had formerly stood.

Then he rose, triumphing with hope and radiant with love, and threw himself into the arms of the Christ.

Then Calvary trembled : its arid summit was suddenly clothed with a fresh and brilliant verdure, and was crowned with flowers.

At the spot where the cross had stood, a young vine grew and was loaded with ripe and perfumed fruit.

The Saviour then said : " This is the vine which shall give the wine of universal communion, and it shall grow until all its branches shall embrace the whole earth."

Then taking his mother by the hand, he extended the other to the angel of liberty, and said : " Let our symbolical forms now return to heaven ; I shall not again come back to suffer death upon this mountain, Mary will no longer weep here for her son, and Lucifer will no longer drag here the remorse of his now effaced crime.

" We are now but one spirit : the spirit of intelligence and of love, the spirit of liberty and of courage, the spirit of life which has triumphed over death."

Then all three took their flight through space ; and rising to a prodigious height, they saw the earth and all its kingdoms stretching their roads towards each other like arms intertwined ; they saw the fields already green with the first fraternal crops, and from East to West they heard the mysterious prelude of the chant of union. And towards the north, upon the crest of a bluish mountain, they saw portrayed the gigantic figure of a man who raised his arms towards heaven. Upon his arms could still be seen the recent marks of the chains he had just broken, and his chest was scarred like that of Lucifer. Under his right foot, upon the sharpest peak of the mountain, still palpitated the body of a vulture, the head and wings of which hung down.

That mountain was the Caucasus ; and the delivered giant who stretched forth his hands was the ancient Prometheus.

Thus the great divine and human symbols met and saluted each other under the same heaven ; then they disappeared to give place to God himself, who came to dwell for ever with men.

NINETEENTH LEGEND.

THE LAST VISION.

ABOVE material forms and the terrestrial atmosphere there is a region whither souls rush when freed from their chains.

It is there that the ethereal aromas, obedient to the thought, clothe it in succession with all the splendors of the ideal form, and people with marvellous beauties the spiritual world of poetry and of visions.

It is into this region that our most beautiful dreams transport us during our sleep, and it is hither that, during their laborious watchings, inspiration elevated the genius of the great poets, to whom the feeling of harmony has, in all ages, given a foresight of the great destinies of humanity. It is here that images live and analogies reign. For poetry is in the images; and the harmony of images is essentially analogical.

It was in this ideal region that Eschylus saw Prometheus suffer, and that Moses heard the words of Jehovah. It was here that the greatest poet of the East, the eagle of Patmos, and singer of the Apocalypse, saw the Christian church under the form of a woman in labor who was painfully bringing forth the man of the future. It was in this marvellous world of poetry and of visions that God appeared to him veiled in light and holding in his hand the eternal Gospel, which slowly opened while the plagues scourged the world, and the destroying angels cleared the earth in order to make place for the city of holy unity and of harmony, the New Jerusalem, which descended from heaven already built, because the idea of harmony exists in God, and will be realized of itself upon the earth when men shall understand it.

The glorious figure of the Christ, after having traversed the earth, reascended into that ethereal region, and there the Redeemer showed to the formerly rebellious, and henceforth regenerate angel, the great assembly of the martyrs.

There were united all the victims of human despotism, all those who had preferred to die rather than to lie to their conscience. The victims of Antiochus, the martyrs of ancient Rome, and those executed by modern Rome.

Some for legitimate beliefs, others for illusions and dreams, they had courageously braved the tyranny of men, and all were pure before God ; for they had suffered in order to preserve the noblest and the most beautiful of his gifts : liberty.

Long had their souls, clothed in white robes spotted with blood, groaned under the altar and cried for justice ; but at last, the day had come, and all together, bearing palms in their hands, they advanced to meet the Redeemer.

The Christ appeared in the midst of them, between his mother and the angel of repentance, and asked them what vengeance they wished to take on their persecutors.

“ Lord, let their souls be given to us, in order that we may dispose of them for eternity, as they disposed of us in time.”

The Christ then gave to them the keys of heaven and of hell, and said to them : “ The souls of your persecutors are yours.”

Then a cry of joy and triumph resounds from the heights of heaven even to the depths of the abyss ; the souls of the martyrs open the gates of hell and extend the hand to their executioners. Every reprobate finds one of the elect for a protector : heaven enlarges its circumference, and the virgin mother weeps with joy at seeing crowd around her so many children whom she had thought for ever lost.

While the whole of heaven smiled at this magnificent spectacle, a new sun was seen to rise upon the earth, and night drew back her veil towards the west. The dark clouds of the past fled laden with phantoms, which were the shadows of the great extinct monarchies and of old vanished beliefs.

Between the night and the rising dawn, the twilight whitened the head of an old man who was seated with his face turned towards the east. It was the traveller of Christian centuries, the outcast of barbarous civilization, the type of the parias, the old Ahasuerus who was resting himself. The people had at last a country, and the Wandering Jew had obtained his pardon.

The earth had become the temple of God. Universal association had realized Christian charity. All lived and labored for each, and each for all. Each enjoyed in peace the fruit of his labors, and no one of the children of God perished with hunger

near the table of his father, for equitably recompensed labor made life easy for all.

Association had increased a hundred fold the riches of the earth, and the union of all interests had given to the labors of man a direction so divine and a power so marvellous, that the seasons themselves had changed, and there was, according to the promise of the apostle, a new heaven and a new earth; and Jesus said to the angel of liberty and of genius: "This is the work which you must accomplish. This is the new city of intelligence and of love. The earth is ready, it thrills with hope. Men see it now as it was formerly seen by the prophet, covered with ashes and with bones; but a new life already stirs under those ashes, and a divine impulse is working in those dry bones. Soon they will rise at the call of the new spirit, and a new people will cover the fields of earth. Humanity will then wake out of a long sleep, and it will appear to it that it sees daylight for the first time!"

Having uttered these words, the Christ prostrated himself before the throne of his Father, saying: "Lord, may thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!"

And the virgin, who is the type of regenerated woman; and the angel of liberty, who had become the genius of order and of harmony; and all the martyrs, who were consoled; and all the reprobates, who were penitent and were freed from their sufferings; answered all together that mysterious word which unites the will of the creature to that of the Creator, and all human forces to the divine power: Amen!

EPILOGUE.



WE have now to offer these legends to all our brothers who labor with us upon the social edifice. We hope they will assist the intelligent and serious men of the people to understand the symbolism of the Gospel, that always true book, which contains so much depth in the simplicity of its teachings and in the artless poetry of its parables. We have not had the intention of writing a new gospel, but we have endeavored to apply to the diseases of modern society the always powerful virtue of the ancient gospel spirit, by making the Christ speak as we can think he would speak, should he again come among us.

Each can supply the insufficiency of these legends. The perfect man may be represented as struggling with all human imperfections, and it is in this sense that St. John the Evangelist says, at the end of his mystic recital: "If all the actions and all the words of the Christ were written in detail, the whole world, I think, would not contain the books that should be written."

We have entitled this work "The Last Incarnation," because we herein seek to explain how the divine Word, after having been incarnated in a man who is the head and the model of humanity, must at last be incarnated in the whole of humanity by the communion of all to the intelligence of one same spirit, and to the fraternity of one same love.

May we have succeeded in our efforts to communicate our faith to those who doubt, and our hope to those who are discouraged! for, at this period, when all seems to be perishing, we have the certainty of being present at the revival of the world.

Already socialism is no longer a system: it is the universal

religion of all active intelligences and of all young and living hearts.

Christianity is at last about to realize its promises ; and philosophy, arriving at unity by means of synthesis, is becoming essentially religious. Reason is also about to be reconciled for ever with Faith.

The time of superstitions has passed away. Men can no longer be amused by mysterious images, no longer can they be made to tremble by inexplicable enigmas.

God has given to us the intellect in order that we may understand, and the heart in order that we may love : and by the feeling he gives to our hearts of his harmonies, he raises our spirit even to himself.

God being supreme wisdom, has created everything for an end, and has given to all his creatures the means of attaining the end which he assigns to them. He preserves harmony among the stars by the laws of attraction, and it is by the same laws that he has regulated beforehand the destinies of men.

The attractions are therefore proportional to the destinies.

Now, the different attractions all have harmonic unity for their end, but they must cause all wills to act in different circles magnificently co-ordinated among themselves. An immense chain of harmony connects with God all his works, and from series to series he distributes life to all beings.

The series distributes the harmonies.

Analogical relations exist between the series, and are as the steps of the ladder of science, of that ladder of gold which the prophet formerly saw during his sleep, and which assisted the spirits to ascend from earth to heaven, and to descend from heaven to earth.

These are the bases of the new science ; they are founded upon all philosophical and religious traditions ; and we can say that they are not the principles of a school, but the theorems of the most advanced science, and the incontestable dogmas of true universal Religion.

THE END.

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